

A PSYCHOLOGICAL AND THEOLOGICAL RESPONSE
TO A CASE OF DEMON POSSESSION, WITH PARTICULAR REFERENCE
TO THE THEOLOGY OF REINHOLD NIEBUHR.

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ABSTRACT

The central focus of this study is Helen, a 21 year-old woman, who came to a pastoral counseling center claiming to be possessed by devils. During the nine months of counseling with her, the author of this study found that her situation raised considerable theological and psychological questions. These questions focused around the theological significance of psychological problems and the psychological significance of theological problems. For example, the question is raised as to whether an individual case of demon possession provides any raw material for making theology. The main aim of this study is to shed some light on the whole subject of demon possession by making detailed study of an individual case. After an introductory chapter outlining some of the history of demon possession a detailed description of the counseling work with the woman is provided in chapter two. Chapter three then contains interpretations of the case material from the view points of the traditional psychiatric categorization, Family Systems theory, Jungian psychology, and the theology of Paul Tillich. The next two chapters then

examine the extent to which the theology of Reinhold Niebuhr provides a framework for understanding Helen's situation.

The final chapter is concerned primarily with practical considerations concerning demon possession. The value of exorcism in such cases is seen as counter-productive and alternative approaches are provided. Special consideration is given to the position of ministers with respect to demon possession and the psychological vulnerability which is inherent in Christian faith and the life of the church. The conclusions in this whole area focus around the need for Christians to incorporate the demonic into their lives in such a way that individuals and communities do not become subject to forces which reverse the process of human growth.

CHAPTER I

ATTITUDES TOWARDS DEMON POSSESSION

Much of the history of medicine and psychiatry is the history of demon possession. Demon possession has been identified in an overwhelming majority of cultures at different times throughout the history of human life on this planet. There are a few glaring exceptions to this; including various groups on the Malay peninsula, the Philippine islands and in Australia, but they are clearly exceptions. Demon possession must be regarded, in its basic form, as a basic theory of disease¹. To get rid of a disease, there have been three traditional methods. The first is to try to expel the spirit mechanically by beating or whipping the patient; the second is to transfer the spirit to the body of another being, usually an animal; and the third, and by far the most frequently applied, is exorcism. Exorcism involves driving out the spirit by conjuring or other psychic means. Exorcism appears to have had its origin in western Asia, and has found its

¹ Henri F. Ellenberger, The Discovery of the Unconscious (New York: Basic Books, 1970), pp. 13

origin in western Asia, and has found its clearest expression in cultures surrounding the Mediterranean².

The history of demon possession must be seen as historically distinct from the history of the Devil, although the two have come close together in the Jewish-Christian tradition. Belief in the Devil is also a very widespread phenomenon, with clearly identifiable common characteristics between different independent cultures. Early Indian, Chinese, Greek, Persian, Egyptian and Scandinavian religions all incorporate belief in the Devil.

Martin Ebon describes one of the earliest cases on record of a case of demon possession:

In a clay tablet found in the temple of Asurbanipal, the Babylonian ruler, at Ninevah, the prayerful appeal of a man to his gods has been preserved. He asks, "How can I rid myself of a tyrannical ghost who seems to possess my body and soul?" Written centuries before the Christian era, this appeal is addressed to three deities: Ea, Shamash, and Marduk....the man was persecuted by "a horrible spectre for many days", which "fastened itself on my back and will not let go of me". During the night, the prayer reads, "he strikes terror into me, sends forth poison and he makes the hair on my head stand up. He taketh the power from my body, he maketh mine eyes stand out, he

² Ibid., p. 13

plagueth my back, he poisoneth my flesh, he plagueth my whole body"³.

There are literally thousands of similar cases which have been documented down the centuries, each carrying an individual's sense of powerlessness and despair. A good selection of such cases is provided in Traugott K. Oesterreich's classic study,⁴ which was published with few of the insights of modern psychology. It remains a basic source of reference for study in this field. Another basic source is Henri F. Ellenberger's monumental study,⁵ which traces the links between primitive medicine and exorcism through to contemporary schools of psychotherapy.

Within the Jewish-Christian tradition, there is a long history of exorcism going back mainly to New Testament times. With a few notable exceptions, there is little suggestion in the Old Testament that disease is caused by evil spirits. In the New Testament, reports of

³ Martin Ebon, The Devil's Bride. Exorcism: Past and Present (New York: Harper & Row, 1974), pp. 7-8

⁴ Traugott K. Oesterreich, Possession and Exorcism (New York: Causeway Books, 1974)

⁵ Ellenberger.

demonic disorders are heavily concentrated in the books of the synoptic writers (Matthew, Mark, Luke and Acts of the Apostles). It appears that this strong belief in demonic disorders was very localized. Kelly points out that "belief in possession was strong in Galilee whereas Judea was relatively free from it"⁶. In the Acts of the Apostles, there are reports of possessions and exorcism taking place in other places than Galilee, but these reports are written by a writer who has been heavily influenced by the Galilian perspective.

In the synoptic stories, some people are given specific diseases by the demons, and others are simply "possessed". Jesus, his disciples and "the seventy" have authority over demons and drive them out. In the early church, exorcism was widespread and apparently very effective. Oesterreich⁷ ascribes this success to the fact that "their religion was still young, their faith fresh and vivid, not yet overlaid with the grey dust of two thousand years of dogmatics!" The early church took

⁶ Henry Ansgar Kelly, Towards the Death of Satan (London: Chapman, 1968), p. 68

⁷ Oesterreich, p. 165

seriously the command of Jesus, "Faith will bring with it these miracles: believers will cast out devils in my name and speak in strange tongues; if they handle snakes or drink any deadly poison, they will come to no harm; and the sick on whom they lay their hands will recover"⁸.

This quotation has a distinctly early church atmosphere to it, and so the question must be asked as to whether the original words of Jesus were not altered or embellished by enthusiasts in the early church. The same question mark has to be put against much of the demon possession and exorcism material in the synoptic gospels, but the material clearly has some kind of foundation in fact. The story of the Gadarene demoniac in Mark 5:1-20 is a key story. It was important in the early church and remains an important source of authority for contemporary Christian exorcists. A discussion of this incident is provided by Leslie Weatherhead⁹ who "translates" much of the demon imagery into contemporary psychological terms. An interesting discus-

⁸ Mark 16:17 (NEB)

⁹ Leslie D. Weatherhead, Psychology, Religion and Healing (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1951), pp. 61-67

sion of aspects of the New Testament accounts of demon possession and exorcism is also provided in an unpublished dissertation by Richard T. Knowles entitled "A Study of New Testament Demon Possession"¹⁰.

By the time of the third century, some parts of the Christian church were requiring an individual to be exorcised before they could be baptized. The question of the importance of exorcism then became one of the many issues which were a source of contention between the Eastern and Western branches of Christianity. It is interesting to note that as recently as Vatican II, this issue still has not been settled¹¹.

During the Middle Ages, a specific form of demon possession manifested itself in witchcraft. Witches were seen as agents of the Devil and as result at least three million innocent women were put to death¹². Most of this

¹⁰ Richard T. Knowles, "A study of New Testament Demon Possession" (Unpublished Rel. D. dissertation, School of Theology at Claremont, 1968)

¹¹ Walter M. Abbott (ed.) Documents of Vatican II (New York, Herder, 1966), pp. 380-381

¹² Thayer A. Greene, On the Devil, (Tape-recorded lecture available from the Analytical Psychology Club of Los Angeles, 1975)

had died away by the beginning of the seventeenth century, and gradually the churches tightened up their regulations concerning the use of exorcism within the church. Thinkers such as Thomas Hobbes and theologians such as Johann Solomon Semler felt that primitive ideas of demon possession had received their deathblow¹³. Semler writes:

the demonological theory of primitive Christianity is immutably perpetuated by the Catholic Church.....there is one other environment in civilized countries where states of possession are freely manifested and that is among spiritualists¹⁴.

The contemporary situation has changed little since the eighteenth century. The Roman Catholic Church still officially recognizes the fact of demon possession and some leading thinkers such as Rahner still support this view¹⁵. Others in the Catholic Church totally disagree. Cortes and Gatti¹⁶ have been particularly outspoken

¹³ Kelly, pp. 85-86

¹⁴ J. S. Semler, Commentatio de daemoniis quorum in Novo Testamento fit mentio, (Halae, 1779), quoted in Oesterreich, p. 192

¹⁵ K. Rahner and H. Vorgrimler, "Possession" in, C. Ernst, (ed.) Theological Dictionary (New York: Herder, 1965), p. 365

¹⁶ Juan B. Cortes and Florence M. Gatti, The Case Against Possessions and Exorcisms (New York: Vantage Press, 1975)

concerning the damage which is being done by perpetuating the idea of exorcism, rather than recognizing the fact that demon possession is simply a variety of various types of mental disorders.

Alongside the continuing debate within the Roman Catholic Church, there has been a growing emphasis on the idea of exorcism within evangelical and charismatic churches. The case material of chapter two describes a woman who has become involved in a number of charismatic groups which are connected with the Anglican and Baptist churches. The appeal of evangelical and charismatic Christianity appears to be growing in most countries where Christianity is a strong influence, and as result the question of demon possession and exorcism persists, and the psychological problems with which it is associated appear to be on the increase.

It is against this background that this present study is set. Demon possession has a long and varied history. Some of it appears to be more "genuine" than others¹⁷.

¹⁷ Ebon, p. 86, gives a good description of a fake case of demon possession.

At the present time it appears to be on the increase, alongside the growth of charismatic Christianity, and the growth in interest in the occult, mysticism and eastern religions. The mainline church may feel uneasy with the whole subject, but it is being forced to face the questions which it raises.

The present study is designed to cover five major areas of concern around the phenomena of demon possession and exorcism:

1. The nature of demon possession and exorcism.

The question is constantly being raised as to whether demon possession is 'simply' a form of mental illness or whether there is more to it. The precise nature of the Devil or demons is important in this question. An attempt will be made to discover the nature of "possession" in one specific case which was encountered by the present writer.

2. Psychological and theological factors in demon possession and exorcism.

Few theologians would recognize a strictly theological dimension to a case of demon possession, and most psychologists feel uncomfortable with the theological di-

mension. The question is therefore raised as to the viability of bringing either theological or psychological categories into cases of demon possession and exorcism.

3. Demon possession and exorcism as sources of information.

The question is raised as to whether cases of demon possession provide any raw material which is necessary for making a theology. Also, does demon possession provide any raw material for psychology, and especially in the whole context of growth counseling? If there is such raw material, it could have considerable importance in understanding of the existential situation of human life.

4. Demon possession and contemporary theology.

The question will be raised as to how far theology is meeting the situation which demon possessed people are presenting. Specifically the theology of Reinhold Niebuhr will be applied to the case material outlined in the next chapter. Reinhold Niebuhr is one of the few theologians who makes mention of the phenomenon of demon possession in his writings, although other theologians clearly consider a number of the issues raised by such cases. Niebuhr's conclusions will be outlined and discussed in chapters four and five.

5. Demon possession and exorcism; practical considerations.

In the final chapter some guidelines will be provided for ministers and pastoral counselors who are encountering people who speak of themselves as demon possessed. Alongside this, the more far-reaching implications for ministry and the church will be elaborated.

Two further points must be made in introducing the case material. Firstly, this present study is devoted to a specific situation which is identified as "demon possession". Some alternative possessing forces are identified at the beginning of chapter three. Whether or not the possessing force is identified as demonic, many of the dynamics and consequences are very similar, and so the present study may be seen as having consequences which reach beyond the sphere of "demon possession", into other "possession" situations.

Secondly, a common factor in all cases of possession is that the individuals feel dehumanized. It is difficult for them to trust and fully experience their own humanity. When discussing case material in such situations there is always a danger of transforming an individual human being into a "case". This is particularly crucial to

remember when approaching the study of individuals who are possessed. As case material is presented and discussed, an attempt will be made to maintain the essential humanity of the human person who is at the center of this study.

CHAPTER II

A CASE STUDY

This chapter is devoted to a detailed description of the counseling work done with a twenty year-old woman over a nine month period at a pastoral counseling center. In the next chapter, psychological and theological implications will be drawn out of this case material. Some details have been changed in the interests of confidentiality.

The counselee's name is Helen, and it was her father who first contacted the center, at the suggestion of the local Baptist minister. After making an appointment, he came to see the intake worker. The intake worker's notes record,

He is a professional man who finds it very difficult to talk about his daughter. He vacillates between calling her "a little backward", "mixed-up" and "brain-damaged". She is one of four children; two sisters eight and six years her senior and a younger brother. One sister is a teacher and the other a high-powered army officer. The younger brother is a medical student.

He referred to his daughter as Lucy throughout the interview, but indicated at the end that she prefers to be known as Helen. This name change happened as result of her becoming involved with a number of "way-out" religious groups. She has gone from one group to another

seeking spiritual help for her problems. This took her out of the home and involved her with other people, whereas previously she had stayed at home alone. He has a niggling doubt that she may have suffered brain-damage at birth, but this has never been checked out. He can hardly bear to say it, even now, and would be horrified if he thought Helen knew of this. They hadn't suspected any difficulty until she was school age. She didn't make friends, she was slow and was laughed at. He wonders now what ghastly experiences emotionally she might have endured at the hands of other children. She has studied shorthand and typing and has learned quite well, but she can't get a job. He said "She can't cope with speed, and she is so immature and naive that it is like talking to a young child".

The intake worker went on to explore the whole area of psychological assessment. Her father was very resistant to any kind of psychological testing, and gave the impression that he was not in favor of such a move, even now. It was arranged that the intake worker should write to Helen and offer her an appointment. She was seen by the intake worker and reviewed by the intake staff and allocated to the present writer.

In the first interview, Helen began by speaking of her difficulty in finding a job. She had applied for a large number of secretarial jobs and, in spite of the fact that there was a general shortage of typists and she had a typing qualification, she had been unable to get a job.

She said "I knew the Lord didn't want me to take them because I wouldn't be able to serve him". She then went on to speak of her "terrible fear". She had been for "spiritual counseling", and had also been to a number of Pentecostal churches for healing. She knew that she was possessed by devils but the Pentecostal people had been unable to do anything about them. The devils filled her with fear. She experienced them in different ways. They filled up her mind with fear so that she could experience nothing else. There were four specific fears: firstly, the fear of condemnation. She knew that she had been saved, but was still certain that on the Day of Judgement, she would be with the goats rather than the sheep. The Sermon on the Mount saying of Jesus about calling him Lord and not obeying his commandments applied to her, and she would be judged accordingly. Second, she feared that she would receive the stigmata and it would be exceedingly painful. Others would see the marks but would not realize that she was in great pain. Third, the body and blood of Jesus were extremely frightening. Transubstantiation was probably true, and it was awful. Fourth, she was prevented from doing things which she enjoyed doing. The devil

did not allow her to concentrate when she was doing crochet or playing the piano.

Speaking of the importance of her faith in her life she said "But Christianity, to me, is all fear and no joy". She reads "There is no condemnation for those who are united with Christ Jesus, because in Christ Jesus the lifegiving law of the Spirit has set you free from the law of sin and death"¹, but she was certain that it was not true. She spoke of her hope that counseling could help her to interpret scripture and that she would be able to shift from her Old Testament view of God to a New Testament view.

When I asked about the other members of her family, she spoke of her two sisters as "good Christians" and her younger brother as "searching". Her father "understands", but her mother was "damned", and it was simply because of Helen's inability to "witness" adequately. Her mother not only said that she herself was not a Christian, but told Helen that she was not a Christian either. Helen spoke of this situation as "not very glorifying for the Lord".

¹ Romans 8:1-3a

Much of the remainder of the first hour was spent in looking at the practical issues involved in finding a job. Her weaknesses were mainly to do with the speed and complexity of work, but she had also done voluntary work in homes for old people and handicapped children, and had found both very distressing.

At the beginning of the second hour, Helen said that she wanted to speak about her fears. She had brought a pencil and paper to make notes, and When I asked about this she said that she felt that God was giving me words to say and it was going to be very important for her to pay close attention. She would like to refer back to my words when she arrived home. We spoke about God speaking and the Devil speaking. God always spoke peace and the Devil always spoke fear. She rarely spoke the Lord's words, and it was impossible for me to speak the Devil's words.

A good deal of time was spent during this hour, and throughout the counseling, on the interpretation of individual Bible verses and specifically on the interpretation of parables. Much of the communication with Helen was only possible through the medium of Biblical and theo-

logical jargon. Wherever possible, I, as counselor, tried to make a link between something she was bringing in a scripture passage and some problem she was currently facing. She rarely saw any link. At this particular time she spoke of the parable of the talents, which she saw as condemning her as she did "so few works for the Lord". I spoke of her need to value her abilities, rather than looking at her weaknesses.

Between the second and third sessions Helen went to a Pentecostal healing meeting and her fear of condemnation had completely disappeared. She had been shown that God is loving and will be on her side on the Day of Judgement. She was also hopeful about a job. She had been for some kind of vocational testing and had been told that she should look for some kind of clerical job involving people. She had written to apply for a job at a religious community, which would mean that she would have to live away from home, and she was clearly excited about this.

Helen then went on to speak about hearing voices. Both God and the Devil had been speaking to her as she was playing the piano. The Devil was telling her that she

should be teaching handicapped children and God was saying that she should do what she wants to do. "The voices" gave her no peace: "They just pound away in my head", she said. I tried, as tactfully as possible, to ask whether this had ever been mentioned to her doctor, and this immediately brought down an enormous barrier. She spoke angrily about doctors as agents of the Devil, and said that she would not come for counseling again if she had to go for a medical. The word "medical" was quite evil for her. She said "I've been frightened of medicals since the day I was born".

The theme of "medicals" also dominated the next counseling session. She had been hesitant to come in case she was forced to have a medical. It was important for her to tell me now that she had completely overcome her "fears". She then returned to the subject of doctors and medicals, and spoke of a childhood experience of a doctor who syringed her ears without warning her that it would hurt. This had been very painful and she had found it difficult to trust any doctor since. She spoke of receiving "terrific assurance" that God was loving, and this had helped when she had been told that she had not been

accepted for the job with the religious community. Instead, she had applied to the local Job Center, and expected to get a job as a sales assistant in a local drug store. She was struggling to decide how she would deal with selling such things as lipstick, as they were evil in God's eyes. She was frightened, too, that people in the store might swear, as this was "pure blasphemy".

Helen began the fifth hour by saying that she did not see the point of counseling. Counseling was unnecessary for somebody like her who had been given "a special assurance of God's love". After a silence she spoke of her doubt. She could not remember a time when she had doubted her faith so much. I tried to link her doubt of faith with her doubt of counseling and her doubt about the future of her life. For example, when she said "I'm unsure about the future in God's hands. I think I'm going to be a martyr", I asked about the success of her job application. It emerged that she had been for an interview and was waiting to hear the outcome. If she got the job, it would be "the Lord's will". It would be difficult, however, as she suspected that the other women assistants in the shop were both pretty and efficient, whereas she

was neither pretty nor efficient, and so she would feel "left out".

She had come to this session prepared with a number of direct questions about specific Bible texts on the subject of predestination. I had been aware in the previous weeks that I had often avoided such questions and so felt an obligation to work with her on some of the texts. It made me realize that she literally did depend upon the interpretation of an individual text for even the smallest detail concerning the way she lived her life. Towards the end of the session I felt able to suggest that it would be useful for her to see our consultant psychiatrist. After assurances that no "medical" or "electrodes" would be involved, she agreed.

On arriving the following week, she was clearly very excited, and said that she had received a "tremendous assurance about the second coming of Christ". Also, last week, after counseling, she went home and had a vision of a big black door opening, and there was "just a crack of light around the edge". She asked about seeing the psychiatrist, and I told her that I had made an appointment for her. She said that the Lord had spoken to her and told

her that only talking would be necessary and that a brain operation would not. She spoke a good deal of the Devil of the stigmata, and the Devil of judgement. Both seemed, to me, to be speaking about both her visit to the psychiatrist and the interview she was going for, later that day, in a local hardware store. She was anxious about working there as "there won't be much chance for witnessing". She was reluctant to leave at the end of the hour.

During the five weeks of counseling which had so far taken place, I had presented the case to the supervision group, of which I was a part, on three separate occasions. Each time there had been a division between those in the group who viewed her as "crazy", and those who strongly felt that she was not. I was not certain, and so felt that a referral to the psychiatrist would be helpful, so as to gain another opinion. I also asked for his opinion concerning brain damage and whether he thought that counseling was the appropriate form of treatment for her. The psychiatrist's report read;

I have not carried out formal intelligence tests, but the impression is of a person of about average I.Q., perhaps a little below. Compared to her obviously brighter siblings, this could result in her parents seeing her as "backward". Much more intensive inves-

tigation would be necessary to form an opinion as to whether her poorer intellectual endowment is the result of brain damage at birth or otherwise, but in any case this is totally irrelevant to her present problems or possible help. She is emotionally immature and frightened by religious ideas that she cannot cope with. I do not think there is any present evidence of psychosis, but she is, I feel, to be regarded as a vulnerable personality.

Further supportive counseling would be worthwhile. She is happy to have gotten a job now, and having this to occupy her mind may help to reduce her preoccupation with 'religious' conundrums.

Before the seventh interview, Helen called to arrange a new time, as she had started her job, and asked whether her father could come to see me. I suggested that we should have opportunity to discuss this question before he came. When she arrived for the interview, she began by talking about her new job, at the hardware store. She was not very happy because "there aren't many opportunities for witnessing". Instead of speaking to people about her faith she had started putting Bible text cards into the pans and kettles she was selling. We discussed this, and she came to the conclusion that she might lose her job if she continued doing this. She had been employed for one month, on a trial basis, and had already argued with the manager on several occasions. She was still terrified that the

marks of the stigmata would appear on her body when she was working, and so she had started going to exorcism services at an Anglican church. An important part of this hour was spent in talking about her feelings of "inferiority". She was very aware that her sisters and brother were "very bright" compared with her. She was "slow" and working in an "unimportant" job. If she were more intelligent she would be able to have a job where there were more opportunities for witnessing. If the Lord came while she was concentrating on selling pots and pans in the hardware store, she would certainly go to Hell.

We decided that her father should come to the next counseling session. Helen said, "I have no secrets from my parents and I would like them to know what is going on".

On entering the room the following week, Helen's father said "I've come to see if you have found any pattern in these little fears of hers". From his point of view, the job of her counselor was clearly to convince Helen that her fears were groundless, and therefore, stupid. The most powerful fear at present was the fear of predestination, and she had not been able to find adequate theological arguments to convince her that this fear was un-

reasonable. There was no real expression of feeling during this hour, and I failed to realize this until afterwards, but felt that this gave me a clearer perspective on the role of the family in reinforcing Helen's fears. Her father saw her fears as "a product of her youth and the age we live in". He said, "when I was her age, we didn't have anything like this kind of thing". Helen said very little during this hour, and only responded to comments which her father made.

At the beginning of the ninth hour, Helen told me again that all her fears had now gone, and that she was finding opportunities to witness at the hardware store. For the first time in counseling she presented a very child-like disposition, about which I felt very positively, as it seemed to suggest that some movement in her style of relating was beginning to happen. She was beginning to see a difference between what the Lord wants for her life and what she wants. I mentioned St. Paul's distinction between words which came "from the Lord" and those words which were his own. Helen said that it was precisely this distinction which she found it hard to make in her own life. Alongside this, from this point until the end of

counseling, Helen felt both that she needed to end counseling, but also found the counseling work useful. Another symbol of this split between her own will and "the Lord's" also emerged over payment. After regular payment to the secretary every week at the beginning of counseling, Helen had not paid for a number of weeks, and when I raised this question, she pointed her finger at me and said, very accusingly, "lay not up for yourself treasure on earth". When I explained that we had made an agreement and that she must comply with that, she apologized and said, "Well of course I shall pay, and it will be good for me to pay now that I am working and can pay with my own money".

During the tenth hour, it became apparent that pressure was building up at home for Helen to stop coming for counseling. She was unsure as to how to respond to this, but wanted to continue. She spoke of regularly having the experience of knowing that the arm of Jesus was around her shoulder, and this felt very good. I asked about her social life and her views of marriage and the possibility of having children, and she became very withdrawn. Quietly she spoke of her feeling that she was married to Jesus. She longed for the second coming as

she longed "to sleep with him and make love with him". In spite of the rather bizarre feelings she was presenting, her tone of voice and matter-of-fact attitude towards this, gave me the feeling that I was listening to an adult who was in control of her life. She went on to speak of herself as selfish and lustful, for having such thoughts and desires. She fears that she will be left behind on the Day of Judgement because of her sexual feelings. I asked her whether she felt Jesus ever had any sexual feelings, and after thinking for a moment, she smiled and said, "But of course he must have done". This was a new thought for her, and clearly the whole discussion had brought a sense of liberation to her.

The following week she arrived with a number of Bible verses for me to interpret. I asked her for her interpretation and then asked her why she felt it necessary to have my interpretation as confirmation of her own. She replied by saying that she was never fully certain that it was God she was hearing when God spoke to her, but when God's words were confirmed by somebody she could trust, then she felt much more at ease. I spoke again of her need to take responsibility for herself, and, on this

occasion, this idea was very difficult for her to understand. This was clearly reflected the following week, when she arrived full of anger and said that this would certainly be the last time she came for counseling. Referring to the previous week, she said, "Instead of leading me into truth you confused me. It's only words from the Devil which lead to confusion. Sometimes I know that the Lord is telling me that predestination is wrong, then a devil of doubt comes along and confuses me". During this whole hour, she was very distant, and acting very strangely, and was clearly very frightened. It was impossible to keep specific issues in focus; rather, the counseling was aimed at making openings for her to express her fear and anger. At the end of the hour, the mood changed when I asked whether she would be coming the following week. At first she said "Certainly not, and my mother will be very pleased to hear it!", and then I asked what she wanted. She smiled, and said softly, "Oh I'd rather come, for another week or two, but I daren't tell her that I'm coming".

On arriving for the thirteenth hour, Helen showed me a number of cards with Bible verses written on them

proving that predestination is not true, and then she told me that this was very definitely the last time she was coming for counseling. If I tried to persuade her otherwise I would certainly be speaking the words of the Devil. The Lord had told her this on the way to counseling. I led the discussion round to ask whether this was her own decision or her parents'. She began to realize that it was her parents' and said "I'll come next week and blow what they think!", which felt like a very positive move. She also spoke of having "crushes" on her minister, and the exorcist she had been visiting. This continued into the next session when I asked whether she had had a crush on me. She was understandably embarrassed and said that she had at the beginning of counseling, but not so much in recent weeks. As she was leaving, she said "Well, now to the Devil's den". "Where's that?" I asked. "Home" she said.

During the period when she was visiting the exorcist the fears, or the devils, became more sharply differentiated, and one fear appeared to predominate for a number of weeks. During the middle part of the counseling, the fear of predestination was paramount and Calvin was

seen as the focus of the fear. On one occasion, Helen visited a library to read a devotional book and found herself reading a book by Calvin expounding predestination. When she came in for counseling a few days later, she said that Calvin had been telling her to throw herself on the railway track. This was one of several allusions to suicide.

In the seventeenth hour, a link was established between her fear of medicals and her sense of being ashamed of her own body. She often prays to Jesus not to look at her when she is in the bathroom. Nakedness, sexual activity and going to the toilet are all dirty, and sinful in God's eyes. After confessing this, Helen went home and told her parents what she had said and they laughed at her. This produced a good deal of anger against me in the next counseling session.

The nineteenth hour was qualitatively different from all the others. My case notes record it as "a cat and mouse affair", in which Helen alluded to many things and never explained any of the allusions. All attempts to enable her to 'work' failed, and towards the end of the hour she thanked me for my help and said "This has been one of

the best weeks. I've enjoyed it", and she was reluctant to leave. She also said, quite bluntly, (as if to prove the overwhelming power of projection!), "I honestly think that you are perfect. You show me the joy and the peace of the Lord I really want".

Two weeks later, the "demon of predestination" had made her very depressed. She had heard a voice of the Devil telling her that predestination is certainly true, and telling her, also, that she should not go and see the exorcist again. She spoke of having a vision, while sleeping, in which she saw the earth half in darkness and half in light. Jesus appeared and said "I will pour out my spirit on all flesh", and the whole world became light. The following week she spoke of a vision in which she had seen a bottle labelled "stigmata" being thrown into hell. Around this time also, a number of her attitudes appeared to be changing. She would occasionally say "O God", and spoke of reading "The sensuous woman" and seeing the film "Helga". She was becoming reconciled to the idea of having her own child, as she realized that the pain of childbirth could not be compared to the much greater pain which Jesus endured on the cross.

During the final five hours of counseling, it became clear that the work was moving to some kind of turning point. Helen was still speaking of the power of the devils, but was clearly finding some kind of 'modus vivendi' with them. In the penultimate hour she brought a large journal which she had been keeping and showed a number of the entries, most of which were material which had already been presented. The aim of the discussion of this material, for her, was to discover whether demons came from "inside or outside". She asked many questions about how the brain works. She said, "Sometimes it seems to work like an eye turning everything upside down". She linked this to her fear of a brain test. A friend of hers had been given electro-convulsive therapy, which had failed, and later a demon of dementia had been cast out. I pointed out that sometimes such therapy can help, and mentioned a friend of mine who had been helped by it, and Helen responded with, "O no! Satan has taken hold of you again". This spilled over into the final session, in which she spoke of two angels at her side binding her against the power of Satan. She had decided that she wanted to end counseling, and nothing was going to change her mind. She

asked how I felt about her decision. I said that if it was entirely her decision I felt at ease with it, although I would miss meeting with her. The possibility of future counseling was left open. The counseling work had a rather 'untidy' conclusion, as it was unclear to me as counselor as to whether she would return the following week. Helen's thinking and acting were totally unpredictable, and often quite contrary.

As her counselor, I was sorry to see her leave counseling. I felt that she had moved a long way and wanted to see that progress sustained. However, if she felt strong enough to leave counseling and discover more of her own resources, I felt that I wanted to trust that motivation in her. My supervisor and supervision group felt a similar tension, and there was considerable discussion as to the best way of concluding the counseling so that she could return at a future date.

If I were dealing with Helen now, I would certainly work in a very different way. A greater emphasis on the family dynamics would probably have enabled her to change more rapidly. Attempts to talk about family dynamics with Helen were not very successful. An effort should

have been made, at the outset, to include both her parents in at least part of the counseling process. Two factors prevented this. Firstly, at this stage, I had not been trained to work with more than one person in counseling, (which may be an important criticism of my own early training as a counselor). Secondly, it was felt that at the age of twenty-one, it was important for Helen to build up her own individual identity apart from her family. If the family had been brought into counseling, it would have been important to look for the dynamics within the family as a whole which led to the considerable pressures on Helen. Also it would have been important to look at the specific dynamics of the relationship between Helen's parents. The justification for this will be demonstrated in Chapter three.

In spite of its shortcomings, the counseling relationship with Helen achieved a measurable amount of growth. For the first time in her life she obtained and held a job. She was also beginning to take a certain amount of control over her fears as she began to take a greater responsibility for herself. She was able to distinguish between those things which she wanted and those things which her family

wanted for her. Counseling gave her the opportunity to discover and experiment with some of her own strength and independence.

In terms of my own growth as a counselor, there is little doubt that much was achieved. Helen raised profound existential and psychological questions within me, which are still alive two years later and provide the motivation for this present study. Perhaps the single most important question was raised when Helen asked whether devils came from inside or outside. Some possible answers to this question are the aim of the psychological and theological material of the following chapters.

CHAPTER III

PSYCHOLOGICAL EXPLANATIONS AND THEOLOGICAL
RESPONSES TO THE CASE MATERIAL

When compared with some of the other instances of demon possession referred to in the first chapter of this study, the case of Helen presents few of the more florid symptoms which are often associated with possession, and this raises the basic questions concerning some kind of description or definition of what constitutes demon possession. A useful description of the demon possessed person is provided by James Lynwood Walker.

The demoniac, no longer a person, is a thing, a passive entity, that feels no responsibility for its activity, whether positive or negative; constructive or destructive; good or evil. Since he feels no sense of containment, and has no sense of boundaries which define him and delineate him from others (since, in other words, he does not know who or what he is), the demoniac is incapable of relating to others or to the environment in any authentic way. The demoniac has given up - in some cases has never possessed - the power to decide and to act freely on his own terms and, therefore, to be responsible (response-able) for the consequences of his decisions and actions. Feeling separated from his real self, the demoniac feels that whatever he does, thinks, or feels is not the will of his real self, but of something or someone that impels him

to think his thoughts, feel his emotions, and do his acts¹.

It is significant that this description makes no mention of the Devil or demons as such, and points to the fact that the demoniac may be possessed by something or somebody other than the demonic. The single most important element in a state of possession is a very profound passivity, which may be expressed in a variety of ways. For example; the girl, Regan, in William Blatty's novel The Exorcist² provides an excellent caricature of some kind of personification of the Devil, (although, as Cortes and Gatti³ point out, this novel is based upon an actual case in which the symptoms were not so dramatic as those depicted in the novel and film of The Exorcist. Another kind of demon possession may be exemplified by the over-ambitious business-man who literally works himself to death, without

¹ James Lynwood Walker, Body and Soul (New York: Abingdon Press 1971), p. 56

² William P. Blatty, The Exorcist (New York: Bantam Books, 1971)

³ Juan B. Cortes and Florence M. Gatti The Case Against Demon Possession (New York: Vantage Press, 1976), p. 70

apparently taking care of any of his own needs. Helen provides an example of a third extreme where the possession frustrates any attempts which she might make to develop any kind of ego-strength. Rollo May⁴, and others, have pointed out it is possible to be possessed by demons (or "daimons" as Rollo May refers to them⁵) which are not overtly evil. Indeed, it is clearly possible to be, in some sense, "possessed" by the Holy Spirit, and the question must be asked as to whether this is "healthy" or whether, in terms of Walker's description, such a person is a demoniac for which some kind of cure would be appropriate. Rollo May approaches the definition of demon possession from a very different standpoint when compared with James Walker, in that he sees daimons as either creative or destructive, and states quite clearly that they are "normally both"⁶. Only when the daimon has taken control over the whole personality is it evil and destructive. Otherwise, the daimon is the urge in every human being to

⁴ Rollo May, Love and Will (New York: Norton, 1969), pp. 122-153

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Ibid., p. 123

affirm itself; it empowers human creativity. It is the basic motivation to artistic expression and is closely related to eros and sexual love. This question of the potentially positive aspect of the demonic will be returned to later, but it is important to say at the outset that the terms "demon possession" and "devils" need not imply a totally evil and destructive process.

Against this background, it is now possible to ask some basic questions arising out of the case material in the previous chapter. The first question concerns the extent to which traditional psychological and therapeutic explanations can describe the problems which Helen is facing in her life. A second question is whether Helen's problems are more appropriately dealt with from a theological, rather than a psychological, perspective. If so, the question is raised as to whether Helen's situation provides data which can be employed in making theology.

After surveying the traditional psychiatric categories of mental disorders, the explanations offered by family systems theory and Jungian psychology will be considered, and this will lead into the explanation provided by the theology of Paul Tillich. The following two chap-

ters are then devoted to a discussion of the relevance of the theology of Reinhold Niebuhr to Helen's situation. These particular schools of thought have been selected as, in the opinion of the present writer, they pay particular attention to the issues raised by Helen's situation.

1. Traditional Psychiatric Categories

A number of different categories could be used in approaching this case material including (i) neurosis, (ii) psychosis (iii) organic brain disorder, and, (iv) personality or character disorder. Each of these possibilities will be considered in relation to Helen's situation.

(i) Neurosis. Helen could be viewed as being in the grip of a profound anxiety neurosis, and this could possibly explain her enduring conviction that something terrible was going to happen to her. Her fear of the stigmata and the Last Judgement could also be interpreted in these terms. Somewhere within her she knew that these things were unlikely to do her any harm, and yet she was gripped by an unreasonable fear over which she had little or no control.

The single most frequent psychiatric response to

cases of demon possession is to give them the neurotic label of "hysteria". Hysteria has long been recognized as one of the basic expressions of neurosis, but in recent years has been sharply criticized as both an arbitrary and anti-feminine category. One outspoken critic has been the feminist writer Phyllis Chesler⁷. One aspect of the symptoms which has been traditionally labelled as hysteria has been the presence of dissociative reaction, in which the subject has taken flight from reality in an attempt to make a more secure and comfortable environment. There is little doubt that Helen is in some sense dissociative, but whether this is sufficient to label her as a "hysterical neurotic" is dubious. Chedof and Lyons⁸ refer to seven typical symptoms of the "typical hysterical personality" in terms of the following qualities:

1. self-centredness and vanity
2. exhibitionistic, overly dramatic

⁷ Phyllis Chesler, Women and Madness (New York, Avon Books, 1972), pp. 80-84

⁸ P. Chodof and H. Lyons, "Hysteria, the hysterical personality and 'hysterical' conversion," American Journal of Psychiatry, CXIV (1958), 734-740

3. emotionally labile
4. emotional shallowness
5. sexualization of all relationships
6. sexual fears and, often, frigidity
7. demanding, dependent.

It is possible to identify most of these characteristics in Helen, but there is also a sense in which most of these traits could be seen as typical of a high proportion of people in society as a whole.

A case of "hysterical possession" is described by Frank Kobler in his book Casebook in Psychopathology.⁹ In this case, a 50-year old woman spoke of being possessed by the Devil, and closely links the possession to her own sexuality, which in turn is related to her own close relationship with her father, and an incestuous relationship with her brother during adolescence. Her father found it easier to relate to his daughter than to his wife. The relationship between her and her mother was extremely ambivalent, comprising both an intense dependency and close-

⁹ Frank J. Kobler, Casebook in Psychopathology (New York: Alba House, 1964), pp. 339-347

ness and an intense hatred. By the age of 50, all her sexual desires are still dominated by an incestuous element which, in turn, is linked in her mind with the Devil. Kobler describes the woman's frequent visits to priests, psychiatrists and a Catholic psychiatric rest home, all of whom could only lessen the anxiety until the next crisis arose. In his description of the case, Kobler appears to leave the whole responsibility for the situation with the woman herself, whereas it is possible to view her "hysteria" as a fairly natural response to an extremely disturbed childhood home, and as "unfinished business" which has grown in intensity with the passage of time. The parallels between this case and Helen's situation are clear, and both raise the question as to how far the presenting person's "sickness" should be the focus of attention, and how far it is a family responsibility. Kobler appears to accept the reality of some kind of external force as "the Devil" and appears also to give the woman responsibility for "entertaining the devil within her"¹⁰. (Interestingly, this

¹⁰ Ibid., p. 346

comes in response to the woman's claim of having the "stigmata diaboli").

Another expression of demon possession under the heading of "neurosis" is Tourette's syndrome¹¹. Although this is unlikely to be a part of the explanation of Helen's situation, it is very important for it to be included in many cases of demon possession. The symptoms of Tourette's syndrome, as first described by the French physician Gilles de la Tourette¹² in 1885, include:

1. violent outbursts
2. coprolalia, or foul speaking
3. convulsive twitching of muscles
4. Echolalia, the imitation of the speech of another person.

Powerful tranquilizers now enable Tourette sufferers to live a normal life, but a full explanation of the origin

¹¹ A. K. Shapiro (et al.) "The psychopathology of Gilles de la Tourette's syndrome," American Journal of Psychiatry, CXXIX (1972), 427-434.

¹² Gille de la Tourette, "etude sur une affection nerveuse, caracterisée par de l'incoordination motrice, accompagnée de l'echolalie et de coprolalie", Archives de Neurologie, IX (1885), 159, cited by Cortes and Gatti, p. 97.

of the symptoms has not, as yet, been found. The question remains as to how far giving such symptoms a diagnostic label provides some kind of explanation for their appearance, and as to whether such labelling automatically excludes any 'supernatural' explanation. It is interesting that while Cortes and Gatti¹³ choose to explain the Mt. Rainier-St. Louis case ("The Exorcist" case) in terms of neurotic manifestations occurring within the boy, they readily admit that they cannot find any explanation for the poltergeist phenomena which are happening around the boy¹⁴.

This whole discussion highlights the inadequacy of labelling a condition as "neurosis", as it appears to do little more than provide a very general description of a large variety of symptoms. The word "neurosis" technically refers to a "functional disorder of the nervous system"¹⁵, whereas, in many cases, neurotic people are simply responding, in a noticeable way, to destructive circumstances

¹³ Cortes and Gatti, pp. 83-84

¹⁴ Ibid., p. 84

¹⁵ Definition from Cassells English Dictionary.

which have arisen in their lives.

(ii) Psychosis. The next major group of conditions to be considered are the psychoses. Psychosis accounts for one fourth of all first admissions to mental hospitals in the United States, and covers an area of mental disorder where the sufferers are popularly referred to as being "mad" or "crazy". The psychotic has lost touch with reality, either by withdrawing into a fantasy world or by exhibiting exaggerated or inappropriate emotions. In extreme cases there are personal delusions, such as the person believing themselves to be Jesus or Hitler, or hallucinations, where they see non-existent objects or hear voices.

Throughout the counseling work with Helen, the question was constantly raised in the counseling supervision group as to whether she was psychotic, and the psychiatrist referred to the fact that she should be considered as a "vulnerable personality" in his report. It appears that Helen was on the borderline of psychosis, and yet she maintained sufficient contact with reality to counteract the more "crazy" symptoms. A clearer example

of this situation is provided by Landis and Mettler,¹⁶ where an anonymous but clearly intelligent man describes his experience of hearing the voice of the Devil over a period of seven years. The voices were so strong that he had to retire from his occupation. "They did not gain full control of his behavior, so that he was never judged insane, nor did he ever consider that he had lost his mind, despite his inability to control the intrusive ideas".¹⁷

A personal acquaintance of the present writer speaks very graphically of a period of breakdown when he was unable to continue working as a minister as he felt that the Devil had taken control of his will. The control persisted for a number of months and then ceased, after which he resumed his work as a minister. Such a "possession" is normally described as a "psychotic episode", although the basic question remains as to whether he was in fact indulging in some kind of hallucination or whether he was in fact possessed by some external entity. Landis and Mettler record

¹⁶ Carney Landis and Fred A. Mettler, Varieties of Psychopathological Experience (New York: Holt, Reinhart and Winston, 1964), pp. 31-32

¹⁷ Ibid., p. 32

that such experiences are not unusual.

Often it will be found that such incidents will be recorded by mystics, saints, and other religiously inclined persons. It is difficult to distinguish clearly between accounts written by religious persons and those provided by persons who had never given particular attention to any religious belief or practice.¹⁸

One particular type of psychosis which may be applicable in Helen's situation is that of the schizoid personality.

Kobler says of the schizoid personality:

Schizoid personalities are often in an approach-avoidance conflict with respect to affection and human contact. They retain a hunger for affection and tenderness but are extremely ambivalent towards the prospect of entering a relationship. Their need for love remains at the infant level and continues to express itself in the form of fantasies of physical contact with nurturing figures. The fact that they were rejected in infancy leaves them with a crippled sense of self-worth and terrifying feelings of guilt and anger.¹⁹

This would appear to provide a precise and insightful description of Helen's condition, and yet such a description does not somehow "do her justice". It is accurate but not complete. Perhaps, therefore, it is possible to conclude that Helen is a borderline schizoid personality. The basis for this conclusion lies in her low self-esteem,

¹⁸ Ibid., p. 125

¹⁹ Kobler, p. 353

her ambivalent style of relationships, her sense of rejection, and her hallucinatory experiences.

(iii) Organic brain disorder and personality disorder. These two categories are mentioned for the sake of completion at the conclusion of this section concerning traditional psychiatric categories. Firstly, organic brain disorder was mentioned as a possibility by Helen's father during the preliminary interview with the intake worker. It would have been advantageous to check this out, and thus to settle the question which had been in their minds since Helen's birth. The conspiracy of silence around this subject provides a very conspicuous factor in the whole situation. However, it does seem unlikely that such a disorder would produce the kind of symptoms which Helen was presenting. Although it cannot be excluded completely as a possibility, organic brain disorder would have tended to exhibit rather more obvious symptoms than those which Helen presented. The main symptom which the family saw as pointing to the possibility of brain damage was Helen's low intelligence and her slowness. This perception appears to have been distorted, however, as Helen

was not unintelligent; rather she was less intelligent than her sisters and brother.

The second major area of disorder which should be mentioned is that of personality or character disorder. Sufferers from such conditions are normally referred to as psychopaths or sociopaths, or even criminals or sexual deviants. In excluding the possibility of such a disorder in Helen's case it is sufficient to say that at no time during counseling was there any sense of the feeling of disconnectedness and absence of appropriate feelings which are invariably associated with such cases. It is thus possible to conclude that the traditional psychiatric categories provide little more than a very elaborate description of Helen's situation. None of them, of itself provides a full description. Rather, the different categories shed light on specific aspects of Helen's psychological problem. Taken together, the categories would describe a pathology, but they offer no scope for taking seriously Helen's considerable existential and theological dilemma.

2. A Family Systems Explanation

A discussion of the Family Systems approach to the case material is included at this stage as it appears to provide some fundamental insights into the forces which were operating within Helen's immediate environment.

Relatively little information concerning the dynamics of family interaction emerged during counseling. Helen was particularly reluctant to say anything critical or negative about other members of the family. In retrospect it probably would have been better to have made an attempt to draw all the other members of the family into the counseling at some point. If this had been done, it might have been possible to identify the family dynamics which were contributing to Helen's problems. The question remains, however, as to whether more was achieved working with Helen alone than might have been achieved working with the family as a whole.

The uncertainty in intake concerning brain damage, and the reluctance of the parents to investigate this area, immediately raises the question of the parents own psychological needs with respect to their daughter. One possible interpretation of this is provided by Bell and

Vogel²⁰ who studied a cross-cultural sample of families with "disturbed children" and identified a mechanism which forced the child to become a scapegoat for the whole family. Such a scapegoat can become the focus for conflict between parents or between the family and the community of which they are a part. They found no clear-cut reason for the selection of a specific child, but did find that those members of the family who perform essential, irreplaceable functions for the family are not scapegoated²¹. This means that the normal processes of family functioning are left undisturbed, and:

The "cost" in dysfunction of the child is low relative to the functional gains for the whole family.

In all cases, with partial exception of one family, a particular child was chosen as the scapegoat, while the other children were relatively free of pathology. The selecting of a particular child is not a random matter; one child is the best symbol. Just as a dream condenses a variety of past and present experiences and a variety of emotional feelings, the scapegoat condenses a variety of social and psychological problems impinging on the family.

²⁰ N. W. Bell and E. F. Vogel (eds.) A Modern Introduction to the Family (New York: Free Press, 1968) Essay #31, "The emotionally disturbed child as the family scapegoat", pp. 412-427

²¹ Ibid., p. 416

Who is selected as the scapegoat is intimately related to the sources of tension. Where value-orientation conflicts existed, the child chosen was the one who best symbolized these conflicts. For example, if the conflicts revolved around achievement, a child who failed to achieve according to expectations could become the symbol of failure. Alternatively, a child might be an appropriate object because he was achieving independently and thus violating norms of loyalty to the group.

The position of the child in the sibling group frequently became a focus for the unresolved childhood problems of the parents. If the parents' most serious unresolved problems were with male figures, the child chosen to represent the family conflict was normally a male child. Similarly, sibling order could be a strong factor. If one or both parents had problems with older brothers, an elder boy in the family might become the scapegoat²².

It is clearly possible to see the achievement question in relation to Helen's situation. She is obviously not demonstrating the same level of intelligence as her two elder sisters and younger brother. Her strong feelings of inferiority, had some foundation in fact but were strongly enforced by other members of the family. There is, of course, a very genuine problem of parental expectations and the less intelligent child, which is experienced in many families. The question remains, however, concerning

22 Ibid.

the reality of Helen's lesser intelligence, and how far she was simply living down to expectations by not developing her intellectual capacities in response to parental pressure in early childhood.

The question should also be raised concerning Helen's parents' own sense of achievement. Bell and Vogel identify a direct link between parental achievement and the consequent expectations:²³

In three of the families, the scapegoat had considerably lower intelligence than did the other children in the family. In all these families, there were serious conflicts about the value of achievement, and the parents were unable to accept the fact that their children had limited abilities, and they continually held up impossible standards for these children. Although all three children had I.Q.'s in the 80's or below and had failed one grade or more, all three mothers stated that they intended that their children should go to college. At the beginning of therapy, one of the mothers hoped her son would attend medical school and become a doctor; another had begun to put away a small amount of money from a very tight budget for her daughter's college education, even though the daughter's intelligence was that of a moron. At the beginning of therapy, none of the parents was able to deal directly with his own difficulties in achievement.

Putting to one side the very interesting juxtaposition of genders in this quotation, it is important to take into

²³ Ibid., pp. 417-418

account the mechanism which involves parental unloading of their own sense of failure onto their child. Virginia Satir, in a chapter headed "Marital disappointment and its consequences for the child"²⁴ highlights the fact that marital tensions can easily be unloaded onto a child, who then acts out the tensions which exist within and between the parents. An example quoted by Satir involves a couple, both of whom have a very low sense of self esteem.²⁵ Each looks to the other to enhance self-esteem, and each fails to give it to the other. They both become disillusioned and disappointed and look to their children to compensate for their own lack of self-esteem. This mechanism may have been operating in Helen's case, and it may have become involved with her father's hope for a son rather than another daughter. It is possible that Helen symbolized a very powerful sense of failure within her father, most obviously; but more likely, within both her parents. Helen's fear of the Day of Judgement may be seen as somehow symbol-

²⁴ Virginia Satir, Conjoint Family Therapy (Palo Alto: Science and Behavior Books, 1967), pp. 27-44

²⁵ Ibid., p. 28

ic of the judgement which her parents continue to make of her. Each of her elder sisters may have also carried these high expectations, and when they both left home, it seems likely that the pressure on Helen would increase considerably.

A number of factors may account for the fact that Helen's sisters "survived" whereas she did not. (Although little is known of them, and the price they may have had to pay for survival). Physically Helen is small and thin, and has a severe cast in her eye. Photographs of the family clearly revealed that physically she is the least attractive member of the family. Satir points out that it is often the least attractive member of the family who becomes the focus of scapegoating, as they are seen as enhancing the low self-esteem of the parents.²⁶ Instead of referring to the "scapegoat", Satir refers to "the identified patient" as they are often the individuals who find their way into therapy.

It is possible to understand Helen's situation in these kind of terms. It could be that both her parents are

²⁶ Ibid., p. 34

subject to anxiety concerning low self-esteem, which has become focused upon Helen in such a way that she is now the identified patient. It is likely that a mechanism of double-messaging has been taking place in which her parents rewarded achievement and also rewarded her lack of achievement in rather more subtle ways. In such a situation a person may suffer considerably. Satir mentions three basic possible causes of suffering which a person in this position may endure:

The Identified Patient, however, suffers the most, in spite of receiving occasional relief from the role, or occasional secondary rewards.

- a. He internalizes the marital conflicts, which makes it difficult for him to maintain gratifying male-female relationships. He continues to live out the family drama with other males and females, and long after the other two participants in the drama are dead.
- b. He feels low self-esteem. His label as the bad, different or sick one only reinforces his belief in his own worthlessness.
- c. He is inappropriately trained to cope outside the family.²⁷

The first of these raises the whole question of sex-roles. Helen feels close to her father and has a sense

²⁷ Ibid., p. 42

of dependency on her mother; yet, at one stage she spoke of her own hatred of her mother, and said, "If God doesn't love my mother, why should I be expected to?". Here is the clear link between Helen's own feelings for her mother and the question as to whether or not her mother is "saved". Helen's father said that he and his wife held very similar religious views and he could not understand why Helen saw him as saved and his wife as damned. It is clearly possible to interpret this situation in some kind of Freudian Oedipal situation, which may have been exacerbated by a conflict between the parents.

Helen's fears may be seen as symbolic of the conflicts within which she finds herself in the family context. She came into therapy at the time when she would be the last child living at home, and so, in a sense, one day of judgement had arrived. She was still unprepared for life in the adult world and the fears symbolized her own real fears of independence from home. The stigmata may be seen as symbolizing her own hatred of her own body, which, in turn hinged upon her own sexual anxiety - all of which had been reinforced by other members of the family. The question remains, however, as to how far the religious dynamics

of Helen's situation were simply pegs upon which she could hang her own inner inadequacies, or, on the other hand, how far Helen's life situation is precisely that which religious language is attempting to label and describe.

The Family Systems approach certainly sheds a good deal of light upon some of the dynamics of Helen's situation, but it still leaves unanswered Helen's question as to whether devils come from inside or outside. At one level, possession by the devil, could be precisely the mechanism which Bell and Vogel²⁸ describe as scapegoating.

3. A Jungian explanation

It is important to mention at this point that the work with Helen was carried out at a counseling center with a Christian/Jungian emphasis. The counselor's supervision group was under the direction of a Jungian analyst and so the work was essentially carried out against a Jungian analytic background.

The Jungian position provides a convenient bridging point between the psychological and theological inter-

²⁸ Bell and Vogel, p. 412

pretations of Helen's situation as it accepts the reality of evil as a fundamental psychological phenomenon. It provides a context in which it is possible to ask the question concerning the extent to which "evil" is the root of Helen's problem.

It is possible to interpret Helen's situation as an extreme situation of encounter with the shadow. Jung says of the shadow:

The shadow is a moral problem that challenges the whole ego personality, for no one can become conscious of the shadow without considerable moral effort. To become conscious of it involves recognizing the dark aspects of the personality as present and real.

Closer examination of the dark characteristics - that is, the inferiorities constituting the shadow - reveals that they have an emotional nature, a kind of autonomy, and accordingly an obsessive or, better, possessive quality. Emotion, incidentally, is not an activity of the individual but something that happens to him. Affects usually occur where adaptation is weakest, and at the same time they reveal the reason for its weakness, namely a certain degree of inferiority and the existence of a lower level of personality. On this lower level with its uncontrolled or scarcely controlled emotions one behaves more or less like a primitive, who is not only the passive victim of his affects but also singularly incapable of moral judgement.²⁹

Jung then goes on to speak of the mechanism of

²⁹ C. G. Jung, Aion: (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1951), pp. 145-146

projection, which unloads the shadow onto a convenient person or persons in the individual's environment. In Helen's situation, the Devil could be seen in this role of taking her projections of the shadow.

Marie-Louise Von Franz has provided probably the best elaboration and extension of Jung's thinking on this subject³⁰. At the beginning of her study she warns against taking too narrow a view of the nature of the shadow as Jung, himself, described the shadow as "simply, the whole unconscious", and Von Franz describes it as a "'mythological' name for all that within me of which I cannot directly know"³¹.

John Sanford³² provides a very vivid example of a man's encounter with his unconscious shadow. He describes the situation of a 50-year-old business man who is a parishioner where he, John Sanford, is a clergyperson. The man is a very moral and upright person who has a series of very life-like dreams which involve an encounter with a

³⁰ Marie-Louise Von Franz, Shadow and Evil in Fairy Tales (New York: Spring, 1974) p. 1

³¹ Ibid.

³² John Sanford, Dreams (Philadelphia: Lippincott, 1968).

dark man who comes and stands at the foot of his bed. He gets out of bed, chases him and fights with him³³. Sanford compares this struggle with the Biblical account of Jacob's wrestling with the angel³⁴ and underlines the fact that such an encounter with the shadow is essential in the move towards individuation and wholeness. Sanford also writes about "The Inner Adversary" where he focuses on the shadow in the context of the teaching of Jesus in the New Testament³⁵.

As well as these individual and personal aspects of the shadow, there are also collective dimensions to its formation. Perhaps the most obvious recent example of an extreme functioning of a collective shadow was the rise of Naziism in Germany in the 1930s. Von Franz points out that at home many individuals would be anti-Nazi, but when they went to local party meetings, something switched and

³³ Ibid., pp. 144-146

³⁴ Genesis 32:24, which has been elaborated in John Sanford, The Man Who Wrestled With God (King of Prussia, Religious, 1974)

³⁵ John Sanford, The Kingdom Within (Philadelphia: Lippincott, 1970), Chapter six, pp. 111-131

they took on a collective shadow³⁶.

Loneliness or isolation is another important factor in the formation of the shadow. Physical or emotional isolation releases a certain amount of energy which is normally employed in relating to others; and this energy can become channeled into the unconscious in such a way that previously dormant parts of the unconscious can come alive, and as Von Franz says, "either the devil will get you or you will find greater inner realization"³⁷. Von Franz describes her own experience of struggling to cope with ascetic loneliness in an Alpine cabin, and how rapidly she imagined that a murderous wood-cutter would be seeking to kill her. After a good deal of inner struggle, she was able to face the murderous wood-cutter within herself, and she found it possible to spend time in the cabin alone, with the door unlocked, and without fear.³⁸

In Helen's situation there is a profound sense of loneliness, in spite of the fact that many people surround

³⁶ Von Franz, p. 9

³⁷ Ibid., p. 151

³⁸ Ibid., p. 152

her. If healing is to occur, ways have to be found for her to encounter the fears within herself so that possession may cease. Helen must be able to feel some identification with her own Devil if the Devil's control over her is to cease.

The other major Jungian archetype which may be used in analyzing Helen's situation is that of the "animus"³⁹. The animus is the male personification of the unconscious in women. As such, the animus can be both a very positive and very negative figure⁴⁰. Marie-Louise Von Franz has written concerning the animus that it can sometimes take on the form of a demon of death:

For example, in a gypsy fairy tale a handsome stranger is received by a lonely woman in spite of the fact that she has had a dream warning her that he is the king of the dead. After he has been with her for a time, she presses him to tell her who he really is. At first he refuses, saying that she will die if he tells her. She insists, however, and suddenly he reveals to her that he is death himself. The woman immediately dies of fright.

.....psychologically he represents a particular form of the animus that lures women away from all human

³⁹ "The Syzygy": Anima and Animus, in Jung, Aion.

⁴⁰ C. G. Jung (ed.) Man and His Symbols (London: Aldus Books, 1964)

relationships and expecially from all contacts with real men⁴¹.

A well known example of possession by such an animus figure is provided in Emily Bronte's Wuthering Heights in the character of Heathcliff.

How far the Devil in Helen's psyche is that of her own animus is difficult to say, although it is clearly having the effect of sabotaging her relationships and especially those with men.

Jung also distinguishes two levels of conscience, the first of which is customarily referred to as "superego" and is formed by parental and social pressures; the second is described by Ann Ulanov as "a numenous imperative that operates as if it were autonomous and should be regarded as the voice of God"⁴². Jung says:

The moral reaction is the outcome of an autonomous dynamism, fittingly called man's daemon, genius, guardian angel, better self, heart, inner voice, the inner and higher man and so forth. Close behind these, beside the positive, "right" conscience, there stands

⁴¹ Ibid., pp. 189-191

⁴² Ann B. Ulanov "The Psychological Reality of the Demonic" in Alan M. Olson, Disguises of the Demonic (New York: Associated Press, 1975), p. 136.

the negative "false" conscience called the devil, the seducer, the evil spirit⁴³.

Helen's life was apparently ruled by very powerful unconscious forces and mediated through the personified archetype of the Devil and her conscience. The extent to which these forces constellated in the animus was not clear, but it seems likely that they did, and as result she was unable to make real relationships with those around her. As result of being ruled by these unconscious forces, she was in touch with a level of archetypal evil which is highly impersonal and unalterably opposed to human consciousness. Theology regards evil as largely a mystery, an impenetrable darkness, a non-existence which can make its presence felt. Helen was living daily with the reality of such evil in a way that few others can begin to understand.

4. A Tillichian explanation

Tillich sees all human beings as living in a state of estrangement. "Man is estranged from the ground of

⁴³ C. G. Jung, Civilization in Transition (New York: Pantheon, 1964), p. 447.

his being, from other beings, and from himself"⁴⁴. Human beings are somehow cut off from the human nature which God intended. Tillich is careful to draw the distinction between sin and estrangement and is anxious to keep the word "sin", as he sees that human beings are somehow responsible for their estrangement. It is a matter of both personal freedom and universal destiny. Estrangement can be conquered by the law of love. "Love as the striving for the reunion of the separated is the opposite of estrangement"⁴⁵.

The whole world lives in a state of estrangement and so it is ruled by structures of evil, which are in turn symbolized as demonic powers. These demonic powers rule the lives of individuals, nations and even nature itself. Human beings are reluctant to accept their own finitude and live in a permanent state of self-elevation. Tillich speaks of "hubris" and "concupiscence"⁴⁶ as basic expression of human estrangement.

⁴⁴ Paul Tillich, Systematic Theology (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1957), II, 44.

⁴⁵ Ibid., II 47.

⁴⁶ Ibid., II 49-55.

Tillich makes an interesting point about the nature of collective estrangement as he sees that all are guilty in a situation where estrangement happens. Even the victims of tyranny are somehow responsible for its existence⁴⁷. This strikes a remarkable parallel with the idea of "scapegoating" and the "identified patient" syndrome as recognized by family systems theory⁴⁸.

Within the context of talking about existential estrangement, Tillich speaks about "self-loss", in words which seem to closely describe Helen's situation:

Self-loss as the first and basic mark of evil is the loss of one's determining center; it is the disintegration of the centred self by disruptive drives which cannot be brought into unity. So long as they are centered, these drives constitute the person as a whole. If they move against one another, they split the person. The further the disruption goes, the more the being of man as man is threatened. Man's centered self may break up, and, with the loss of self, man loses his world.

Self-loss is the loss of one's determining center, the disintegration of the unity of the person. This is manifest in moral conflicts and in psychopathological disruptions, independently or inter-dependently. The horrifying experience of "falling to pieces" gets hold

⁴⁷ Ibid., II 58-59.

⁴⁸ See page 42 above.

of a person. To the degree in which this happens, one's world also falls to pieces. It ceases to be a world, in the sense of a meaningful whole. Things no longer speak to man; they lose their power to enter into a meaningful encounter with man, because man himself has lost his power. In extreme cases, the complete unreality of one's world is felt; nothing is left except the awareness of one's own empty self⁴⁹.

In such a state of estrangement, human beings are forced to discover meaning in their environment in such a way that their limited self is completely lost. Total estrangement forces the individual to become a "mere object of environmental impact"⁵⁰. Again, this would appear to be a good description of Helen's situation in the context of the family. She has become a "mere object of environmental impact" as result of the self destructive processes which went on within her and within her family.

Once a process such as this has been initiated, it is very difficult to break it:

If man's freedom is not directed by destiny or if it is a series of contingent acts of arbitrariness, it falls under the control of forces which move against one another without a deciding center. What seems to be free proves to be conditioned by internal compulsions and external causes. Parts of the self overtake

⁴⁹ Tillich, II, 61.

⁵⁰ Ibid., II, 62.

the center and determine it without being united with the other parts⁵¹.

This sense of psychic disunity appears to describe Helen's predicament precisely, and gives a new significance to her statement about the fact that her counselor was speaking the words of the Devil whenever she became confused about something which was said.

Tillich goes on to speak about "dynamics" and "form", both of which are merged in "man's essential nature". When an individual is under the control of "hubris" and "concupiscence", he or she is driven in all directions without any definite aim or content. Things become confused and distorted into a formless urge for self-transcendence. Form requires dynamics and dynamics require form:

Such experiences belong to man's predicament in individual as well as social life, in religion as well as in culture. There is a continuous flight from law to chaos and from chaos to law. There is a continuous breaking of vitality by form and of form by vitality. But, if the one side disappears, the other does also. Dynamics, vitality and the drive to form-breaking end in chaos and emptiness⁵².

51 Ibid., II 63.

52 Ibid., II 64.

This again provides a useful description of the situation in which Helen finds herself. Form and dynamics in her life are failing to integrate with each other, in spite of the fact that her total energy is being concentrated on this process. The end result is an imbalance which leaves her with chaos and emptiness.

A central point in Tillich's theology, as it is in many contemporary psychologies, is "The more individualized a being is, the more it is able to participate"⁵³. Drawing from existentialism, Tillich points out that one human characteristic which is universal is loneliness and the response to that loneliness is the human inclination to seek interdependence by submergence in the collective. Again, Tillich sees the need for a balance between individualism and submergence in the collective, in such a way which that the individual and the society are able to move towards New Being, rather than being trapped in a state of estrangement.

For Tillich there is a strong link between the human condition of estrangement and the human awareness of

⁵³ Ibid., II 65.

finitude. This awareness produces anxiety when it is viewed from the situation of estrangement, as it leads to the realization that death symbolizes non-being. Anxiety about non-being is already present in everything which is finite. Tillich points out that Jesus experienced this anxiety as he approached his death. This anxiety arises out of the painful realization of a lost eternity. Anxiety about having to die is directly related to the individual's desire for suicide. Suicide appears to be a better alternative to natural death. When this process has begun, death becomes an expression of the totality of evil. Thus, Tillich concludes, estrangement naturally leads through existential finitude to existential evil.

It is possible to identify this link in Helen's situation as she longed for her own death, as long as she could be comforted by Christ in her death. Suicide was one possibility for her, and certainly preferable to natural death, which she found it impossible to contemplate. The alternative which Tillich does not mention, which was the focus of Helen's hope, is the second coming of Christ. If that could happen, her earthly life would be terminated, and would achieve her New Being.

Tillich sees the demonic in terms of finitude and time:

The categorical nature of finitude, including time, space, causality and substance, is valid as structure in the whole of creation. But the function of the categories of finitude is changed under the categories of existence. In the categories, the unity of being and non-being in all finite things is manifest. Therefore they produce anxiety; but they can be affirmed by courage, if the predominance of being over non-being is experienced. In the state of estrangement, the relation to the ultimate power of being is lost. In that state, the categories control existence and produce a double reaction toward them - resistance and despair.

When time is experienced without "eternal now" through the presence of the power of being itself, it is known as mere transitoriness without actual presence. It is seen - as the myths concerning the gods of time indicate - as a demonic power, destroying what it has created⁵⁴.

He also sees "aloneness," suffering and doubt as qualities which make human beings aware of their finitude and thus lead to despair. This despair he sees as symbolized as the "wrath of God"⁵⁵ and condemnation⁵⁶. He says "For those who are aware of their estrangement from God,

⁵⁴ Ibid., II 68-69.

⁵⁵ Ibid., II 76-78.

⁵⁶ Ibid., II 78.

God is the threat of ultimate destruction"⁵⁷.

Most of the words which Tillich uses to describe the state of estrangement are key words in structuring a description of Helen's situation. She is in a state of despair, anxiety, suffering and doubt where she feels little else but "aloneness" and pain. She is caught at the center of conflicting forces and feels powerless to do anything about them. She longs for God to intervene in her life and change the situation, but this does not happen. All her efforts to change the situation appear to have the opposite effect from that which she intends.

Tillich's description of the state of estrangement uses different words from the psychological descriptions earlier in the chapter, but it appears that he is describing identical phenomena. Reading Tillich, it is easy to gain the impression that he is using theological language to describe the inner realities of life as he has found it, in his own experience. In this sense, theology must always be some kind of personal psychology, and psychology must always assume a theological dimension. This facet of

⁵⁷ Ibid., II 77.

theology is also identifiable in the theology of Reinhold Niebuhr, which is the focus of the next chapter.

CHAPTER IV

REINHOLD NIEBUHR'S ATTITUDE TOWARDS DEMON
POSSESSION

It is important to say at the outset that Reinhold Niebuhr's theology is not specifically a theology of demon possession. Niebuhr refers to demon possession at a number of important points in his theology, but it is not central to his theological system. The description of his theology in this chapter is therefore abstracted from his theology as a whole. There are clearly considerable limitations in the extent to which his theology can be employed in individual cases of demon possession.

The impetus for Reinhold Niebuhr to work out his own theology came from his early experiences as a pastor working in Detroit during and immediately after the First World War. He was overwhelmed by the personal and social problems which he saw and the inadequacy of the solutions which he felt were offered by traditional Christian theology. A major realization came to him after the introduction of the production line at the Ford Motor plant, and that was simply that the problem of human existence is not

going to be solved by knowledge and technology or by improving the social environment. The fundamental human problem, for Niebuhr is sin. In spite of being made in the image of God, humanity has chosen to try and live independently from God. As long as this process continues, human beings will continue to experience personal and social distress. If society is to change for the better, then inner personal lives will have to become more oriented towards God. Niebuhr describes the human predicament as follows:

The Christian view of man is sharply distinguished from all alternative views by the manner in which it interprets and relates three aspects of human existence to each other: (1) It emphasizes the height of self-transcendence in man's spiritual stature in its doctrine of "image of God". (2) It insists on man's weakness, dependence, and finiteness, on his involvement in the necessities and contingencies of the natural world, without, however, regarding this finiteness as, of itself, a source of evil in man. In its purest form the Christian view of man regards man as a unity of God-likeness and creatureliness in which he remains a creature even in the highest spiritual dimensions of his existence and may reveal elements of the image of God even in the lowliest aspects of his natural life. (3) It affirms that the evil in man is a consequence of his inevitable though not necessary unwillingness to acknowledge his dependence, to accept his finiteness and to admit his insecurity, an unwillingness which involves him in the viscious

circle of accentuating the insecurity from which he seeks to escape¹.

Niebuhr's attitude towards demon possession has to be seen against this "back-drop" of his view of the human predicament. Evil is not so much an inevitable consequence of being human, but rather an act of rebellious will against God.

Niebuhr's theology has its origin in a social setting, and continues throughout to have a broad social application. Human beings are seen as being both individuals in their own right and component parts of society as a whole. He sees individuality as both a biological and spiritual phenomenon:

Genuine individuality, embodying both discreteness and uniqueness, is a characteristic of human life. It must consequently be regarded as the product of spirit as well as of nature. Nature supplies particularity, but the freedom of the spirit is the cause of real individuality. Man, unlike animal existence, not only has a centre, but he has a centre beyond himself. Man is the only animal which can make itself its own object. This capacity for self-transcendence which distinguishes spirit in man from soul (which he shares with animal existence), is the basis of discreet individuality, for this self-consciousness involves consciousness of the world as "the other". The animal knows its particular needs and the particular objects

¹ Reinhold Niebuhr, The Nature and Destiny of Man (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1941), I, 150.

in the environment which satisfy those needs. Its consciousness therefore does not transcend the natural process in which it is involved. Animal consciousness is merely the expression of a central organic unity of an organism in relation to its immediate environment. Human consciousness involves the sharp distinction between the self and the totality of the world. Self-knowledge is thus the basis of discreet individuality².

Individuality, self-transcendence and social relatedness are thus seen as basic to Niebuhr's theological system. The balance which he sets up between individual and social responsibility is extremely complex. He identifies the fact that human history has been a gradual movement away from the "'primeval we' of group life"³, which has gradually given to human beings a new freedom to be responsible for themselves, but he is critical of Idealism, Nationalism and Romanticism for their tendency to revert to the group situation. He is also critical, however, of the extremes of individuality which have happened within the history of the Christian church. He points to this danger when he says:

² Ibid., I, 55

³ Ibid., I, 56

If the religious sense of responsibility to God and contrite humility before God is weakened, Christian individuality may become the source of anarchy. This may explain some of the cruel and daemonic aspects of the history of western Christendom⁴.

Alongside this individual form of the "daemonic", Niebuhr also recognizes the existence of a more collective form in contemporary manifestations of political absolutism. In a series of lectures he says:

It must be understood that the children of light are foolish not merely because they underestimate the power of self-interest among the children of darkness. They underestimate the power among themselves. The democratic world came so close to disaster not merely because it never believed that Nazism possessed the demonic fury which it avowed. Civilization refused to recognize the power of class interest in its own communities. It also spoke glibly of an international conscience; but the children of darkness meanwhile skilfully set nation against nation. They were thereby enabled to despoil one nation after another, without every civilized nation coming to the defense of each. Moral cynicism had a provisional advantage over moral sentimentality. Its advantage lay not merely in its own lack of moral scruple but also in its shrewd assessment of the power of self-interest, individual and national, among the children of light, despite their moral protestations⁵.

As Niebuhr wrote these words, he was writing with the bene-

⁴ Ibid., I, 59

⁵ Reinhold Niebuhr, The Children of Light and the Children of Darkness (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1953), pp. 11-12

fit of hindsight after the events of the Second World War. He was eager to point out that the evil of the children of darkness was real enough but this could be compounded and aggravated by the passivity of the children of light. He saw the major difference between the two groups in terms of self-will. He wrote:

The children of darkness are evil because they know no law beyond the self. They are wise, though evil, because they understand the power of self-interest. The children of light are virtuous because they have some conception of a higher law than their own will. They are usually foolish because they do not know the power of self-will⁶.

This split between a collective expression of "self-will" and individual "sin" has certain similarities to the Jungian position outlined in the previous chapter. The collective form appears to have its origin in an aggressive self will whereas the individual's sin is a rather more passive refusal to recognize the fact of human dependence upon God. Niebuhr draws these two aspects closer together when he refers to the difference between "religious" and "moral" definitions of sin:

⁶ Ibid., pp. 10-11

Man is insecure and involved in natural contingency; he seeks to overcome his insecurity by a will-to-power which overreaches the limits of human creatureliness. Man is ignorant and involved in the limitations of a finite mind; but he pretends that he is not limited. He assumes that he can gradually transcend finite limitations until his mind becomes identical with universal mind. All of his intellectual and cultural pursuits, therefore, become infected with the sin of pride. Man's pride and will-to-power disturb the harmony of creation. The Bible defines sin in both religious and moral terms. The religious dimension of sin is man's rebellion against God, his effort to usurp the place of God. The moral and social dimension of sin is injustice. The ego which falsely makes itself the centre of existence in its pride and will-to-power inevitably subordinates other life to its will and thus does injustice to the other life⁷.

This division between the religious and the moral is central to Niebuhr's thinking, and this underlies much of his thinking concerning demon possession. Hans Hoffman summarizes his position when he says:

Man's rebellion against God and his enslavement of his fellowmen, lead Niebuhr to a new search for the true position of man. Then sin confronts him as the disorder caused voluntarily by man, which is the exact opposite of the original order of God. God's order set man in communion with God Himself and gave man therefore a freedom unique within all creation. Man desires to usurp for himself the place of God, and by separating himself from his relatedness to God he

⁷ Niebuhr, The Nature, I, 178-179

turns his ordained free position into disorder and slavish dependence upon the powers of this world⁸.

Set against the pervasiveness of human sin, Niebuhr points to the grace of God and the Christian gospel, which reveals that "wisdom" and "power" are given to the world in Jesus Christ⁹. It is important for him to make the split between "wisdom" and "power" as he sees them as God's gift of revelation of the true meaning of life, but also the gift of the resources to mobilize and fulfil that meaning. In support of this view he quotes I Corinthians 4:19, "The kingdom of God is not a matter of talk but of power", and John 1:17, "Out of his full store we have all received grace upon grace; for while the Law was given through Moses, grace and truth came through Jesus Christ¹⁰.

Niebuhr sees these two aspects of God's activity as loaded with meaning for understanding the meaning of Christian history. On the one hand, God's mercy and for-

⁸ Hans Hofmann, The Theology of Reinhold Niebuhr (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1956), pp. 184-185

⁹ Niebuhr, The Nature, 98

¹⁰ (NEB)

givenness bring to completion the task which human beings cannot. God's grace can overcome the sinful element in human achievements. On the other hand, grace is also the power of God in human beings. Grace, in this sense, is an enabling and empowering force. Niebuhr speaks of this force as being synonymous with the gift of the "Holy Spirit". Concerning the "Holy Spirit" he says:

The "Holy Spirit" is the spirit of God indwelling in man. But this indwelling Spirit never means a destruction of human self-hood. There is therefore a degree of compatibility and continuity between human self-hood and the "Holy Spirit". Yet the "Holy Spirit" is never a mere extension of man's spirit or identical with its purity and unity in the deepest or highest levels of consciousness¹¹.

Niebuhr finds a "comprehensive and profound"¹² expression of the split between grace as mercy and power in Paul's words in Galatians 2:20 where he says, "I have been crucified with Christ: The life I now live is not my life, but the life which Christ lives in me; and my present bodily life is lived by faith in the Son of God who loved me and gave himself up for me". Here Paul is speaking about the

¹¹ Niebuhr, The Nature, II, 99

¹² Ibid., II, 107

fact that his "self" has been broken and shattered and that he is experiencing a new selfhood. This new self has to be constructed in response to the "grace" and "power" from beyond itself. Thus the "Holy Spirit" is the mediating agent of this "grace" and "power". But the "Holy Spirit" is not the only possible agent of reconstruction. There are:

two alternative schemes of salvation. In the one the self is indeed invaded by "spirit" as "power" but it is not the "Holy Spirit" and therefore it destroys the self. In the other, the spirit of the self seeks to extend itself into its most universal and abstract form until all power, and ultimately the self itself, is lost¹³.

Niebuhr is saying here that the self faces three possible alternatives in life; one is to be possessed by the "Holy Spirit"; a second is to be possessed by the power of spirit which is not the "Holy Spirit"; and the third is to become involved in a process of dissolution of the self until all power, and even the self, may be lost.

Of the second alternative, Niebuhr says:

The possession of the self by something less than the "Holy Spirit" means that it is possible for the self to be partly fulfilled and partly destroyed by its submission to a power and spirit which is greater than

¹³ Ibid., 110

the self in its empiric reality but not great enough to do justice to the self in its ultimate freedom. Such spirit can be most simply defined as demonic. The most striking contemporary form of it is a religious nationalism in which race and nation assume the eminence of God and demand unconditional devotion. This absolute claim for something which is not absolute identifies the spirit as "demonic"; for it is the nature of demons to make pretensions of divinity; just as the devil "fell" because he sought the place of God. The invasion and possession of the self by spirit, which is not the Holy Spirit, produces a spurious sense of transfiguration. The self is now no longer the little and narrow self, but the larger collective self of race or nation. But the real self is destroyed. The real self has a height of spiritual freedom which reaches beyond race and nation and which is closer to the eternal than the mere earthbound collective entities of man's history. Such demonic possession therefore destroys and blunts the real self and reduces it to the dimensions of nature¹⁴.

It is important to grasp the fact that in Niebuhr's theology, the "demonic" is not seen as a power which is, of itself, evil. He rather sees the demonic as incomplete as compared with the completeness of God. The sin of the demonic lies in its sincere but naive assumption that it can give to the self the "ultimate freedom" for which it is destined. This recognition of the sincerity of the human choice of the "demonic", however, in no way absolves

¹⁴ Ibid., II, 110-111

the individual from their responsibility for it. Niebuhr is concerned about contemporary efforts to excuse human beings from their sin, when the responsibility for it clearly belongs with the individual. He says:

Man is both strong and weak, both free and bound, both blind and far-seeing. He stands at the juncture of nature and spirit; and is involved in both freedom and necessity. His sin is never the mere ignorance of his ignorance. It is always partly an effort to obscure his insecurity by stretching his power beyond its limits¹⁵.

Another factor which blinds human beings to their own sin is rationalization, which has the effect of devitalizing to the extent that people think that they can find salvation through the processes of their own thinking. This can lead to a misguided sense of self-possession:

Men felt certain that they possessed themselves; and sought in the complacency of their self-possession to extend the range of the self and to make it more inclusive. But a self which possesses itself in such a way never escapes from itself. Human personality is so constructed that it must be possessed if it is to escape from the prison of self possession. The infinite regression of its self-transcendence represents possibilities of freedom which are never actual-

¹⁵ Ibid., I, 181

ized in self-possession; for self possession means self-centredness. The self must be possessed from beyond itself¹⁶.

It is clear that as Niebuhr works through this discussion of possession he has in mind the political realities of the world in which he was living in the 1930s and early 1940s, and he does recognize some qualitative distinction between the possession of a group and the possession of an individual. This is because he understands groups as having a lower standard of morality than that of individuals:

The inferiority of the morality of groups to that of individuals is due in part to the difficulty of establishing a rational social force which is powerful enough to cope with the natural impulses by which society achieves its cohesion; but in part it is merely the revelation of collective egoism, compounded by the egoistic impulses of the individuals, which achieve a more vivid expression and a more cumulative effect when they are united in a common impulse than when they express themselves separately and discreetly¹⁷.

He continues:

For all the centuries of experience, men have not yet learned how to live together without compounding their vices and covering each other 'with mud and with

¹⁶ Ibid., II, 111-112

¹⁷ Reinhold Niebuhr Moral Man and Immoral Society (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1932), p.xi

blood'. The society in which each man lives is at once the basis for, and the nemesis of, that fulness of life which each man seeks¹⁸.

Niebuhr thus identifies the collective "demonic" pressures of society as an inevitable consequence of human existence, but the pressures can be resisted by the "power" of the "Holy Spirit" at work in the life of an individual.

One remaining question concerns the extent to which the Devil, and indeed, the Holy Spirit, can be personified. Throughout much of his writing, Niebuhr puts the title of the Holy Spirit in quotation marks, and a number of conservative and more moderate scholars have been very critical of the absence of any stress on the doctrine of the Holy Spirit in his writing¹⁹. It is apparent that the "Holy Spirit" is a rather more mechanistic and perfunctory entity in Niebuhr's theology than the Holy Spirit of traditional Christian faith. Unlike his view of God the Father and God the Son, the "Holy Spirit" is distant and exhibits little human warmth. The same process

¹⁸ Ibid., p. 1

¹⁹ Hofmann, pp. 246-247, and Rachel Hadley King, The Omission of the Holy Spirit from Reinhold Niebuhr's Theology (New York: Philosophical Library, 1964)

of depersonalizing seems to have also occurred to the Devil, and he is critical of those who over-personalize the Devil. Such personification he views as demonic:

The Genesis account of the fall solves the problem of evil upon an essentially monistic basis by making human sin responsible for even the inadequacies of nature and attributing everything from weeds to mortality to the luckless error of the first man. Neither the goodness nor the omnipotence of God is abridged in this naive but sublime conception in which the human conscience assumes responsibility for more than its share of human ills in order to save the reputation of divine virtue..... A profounder instinct than reveals itself to the casual observer persuades fundamentalism to defend the reality of the devil with such vehemence. It may be metaphysically inconsistent to have two absolutes, one good and one evil, but the conception provides at least for a dramatic portrayal of the conflict which disturbs the harmonies and unities of the universe, and therefore, it has a practical and ethical value. The idea of attributing personality to evil may be scientifically absurd but it rests upon a natural error. When the blind and impersonal forces of nature come to life in man they are given the semblance of personality²⁰.

Niebuhr is therefore saying that even though the reality of the personality of the Devil appears to exist, it does not. It is simply a facade for a specific constellation of human sinfulness. This conclusion brings his theology to the very difficult frontier region of the interface

²⁰ Reinhold Niebuhr, Does Civilization Need Religion? (New York: Macmillan, 1928), pp. 196-197

between theology and psychology, and the question remaining unanswered by Niebuhr concerns the way in which the demonic manifests itself in the life of the individual. He assumes that many people are not possessed by the "Holy Spirit", nor are they in his third category of dissolved self-hood and universalism. This leaves a large number, and a significant proportion of lives which are possessed by something other than the "Holy Spirit". To be sure, few people would choose to recognize that they are possessed by the demonic, and the question remains as to whether many individuals in our society are in some sense "demon possessed" without knowing it, and without being aware of the consequences for their own individual freedom.

With these thoughts in mind, the next chapter is devoted to directly applying the theology of Reinhold Niebuhr to the case material outlined in chapter two.

CHAPTER V

REINHOLD NIEBUHR'S THEOLOGY AND THE CASE MATERIAL

There is a sense in which there is a rather "artificial" feel associated with taking the details of one person's theology, written at one time and out of one experience, and applying that theology to the life and experience of another individual at another time. This is especially so when applying a theology to a life other than one's own. Notwithstanding this reservation, there are clearly certain points of contact between the written theology of Reinhold Niebuhr and the life situation of Helen as it emerged in the counseling room.

A second reservation concerning this exercise arises out of the fact that theology usually deals with the human condition in terms of generalities and is very careful to cover itself by recognizing the possibility of exceptions. Indeed it might almost be said that there is a certain "cowardice" built into theology which encourages it to be reluctant to make sweeping theological statements about individuals rather than about populations; and this is particularly true when the theologian has some specifi-

cally bad theological news to deliver to somebody who is standing in front of them. It is, for example, much easier to say "The human condition is basically sinful" than to say "You are basically sinful". The present writer is aware of this danger of being excessively judgemental, and aware, too, of the danger inherent in not being judgemental enough.

Niebuhr is determined to underline the fact that all human beings are sinful and also, all human beings are personally responsible for themselves. This responsibility is an ultimate responsibility which all human beings have, irrespective of whether they choose to recognize it. There is no design fault built into creation so that God can be given responsibility for human sin, and there is no original sin, in the sense that there is no one sin in the history of society which can be held accountable for the sin of humanity as a whole. Niebuhr views every individual as subject to temptation, and all are making their own decisions in response to that temptation within the limits of their own freedom.

At the beginning of counseling, Helen appeared to have little control over her own life; instead she was

subject to it. The question is then raised as to how pertinent it is to speak in terms of "ultimate responsibility" in such a situation. This must be said in spite of the fact that towards the end of counseling Helen appeared to be experimenting with taking a limited amount of control of her own life. This was demonstrated most clearly in her continuation of counseling in spite of the pressures against this from members of her family.

Putting this question to one side, it is still possible to speak in terms of sin in relation to Helen's situation. Hofmann summarizes Niebuhr's view of the nature of sin as follows:

Sin manifests itself in man in the insecure, greedy anxiety in which he strives to establish and protect himself against God, against nature and against his fellowmen, against danger and destruction. Man in his anxious greed desires eternity, "deep, deep, eternity" as Nietzsche said. But man can receive eternity only in loving and voluntary obedience to the God who is person and who wills man's personal, obedient relatedness to Him. Otherwise eternity changes, in the hands of the man who grasps at it, into the timeless torture of loneliness and insecurity which rends him and drives him to new desperate insanities, to final ruin¹.

Within the context of such loneliness and insecur-

¹ Hans Hofmann, The Theology of Reinhold Niebuhr (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1956), p. 196

ity Helen is forced to live her life and her life has been ruined as a consequence. According to Niebuhr, she would have no cause for hope were it not for the absolute love of God, which holds on to those, such as Helen, who see little hope in their world. Unfortunately, no matter how much Helen tells herself about the love of God, it sounds very hollow as she has had so little experience of love and acceptance in her life to date. Her religion apparently had the opposite effect and cut her off from the love of God which she was desperately trying to experience. She would say things like "I just don't seem to be able to grasp the love of God", and "Why do you think God bothered to create me?"; both of these indicate a good deal of awareness of her predicament. Helen's problems rarely seemed to revolve around her obvious lack of insight into her situation, but rather in mobilizing the energy to change her situation. Niebuhr makes the point that love of God is most profoundly experienced by the individual when he or she is restored to relatedness in society. Helen is socially very isolated in spite of her family and her contacts with the various religious groups of which she was a member. She never felt able to fully

trust the love which people expressed towards her, largely because she had never trusted the love of her family, and especially her parents. Niebuhr sees the family as fundamental in the individual's experience of love and sees that it is just as much open to abuse as any other social grouping:

There are thus indeterminate possibilities of redeeming parenthood from the lust of power and making the welfare of the child the end of family life. But there are also many possibilities of using the loving relationship of the family as an instrument of the parental power impulse on a higher or more subtle level. The "saints" may not be conscious of this fault; but the children who have to extricate themselves from the too close and enduring embrace of loving parents know about it².

Precisely what kind of dynamics were operating in the relationship between Helen and her parents remain unknown, but it is clear that considerably more was going on than the loving relationship about which Helen frequently spoke. She spoke of her home, on one occasion, as "the Devil's den" and spoke of her loneliness, and inability to communicate with her parents. When her father attended the

² Reinhold Niebuhr, The Nature and Destiny of Man (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1941), II, 124

counseling hour, it was clear that he had little empathy for his daughter's predicament and gave the impression that, even though he wanted her to be 'better', he was not prepared to go too deeply into the causes of his daughter's problems. The whole family's insensitivity was revealed when they laughed at Helen for talking about her own body and sexuality in counseling. Niebuhr sees such family disconnectedness as an expression of collective human disconnectedness, which, in turn, leads to an existential estrangement of the individual.

Another important descriptive word which Niebuhr emphasizes in this whole area is "anxiety":

In short, man, being both free and bound, both limited and limitless, is anxious. Anxiety is the inevitable concomitant of the paradox of freedom and finiteness in which man is involved. Anxiety is the internal precondition of sin. It is the inevitable spiritual state of man, standing in the paradoxical situation of freedom and finiteness. Anxiety is the internal description of the state of temptation. It must not be identified with sin because there is always the ideal possibility that faith would purge anxiety of the tendency toward sinful self-assertion. The ideal possibility is that faith in the ultimate security of God's love would overcome all immediate insecurities of nature and history³.

³ Ibid., I, 182-183

He goes on to say that freedom from anxiety is only possible "if perfect trust in divine security has been achieved"⁴. Helen is not able to experience that divine security and yet is aware that divine security is what she is struggling to achieve.

One possible way of describing Helen's dilemma is to view her as torn between the three different possibilities which Niebuhr describes for the individual. These three are:

1. Possession by the "Holy Spirit".
2. Possession by a spirit which is not the "Holy Spirit".
3. Involvement in a process of dissolution of the self until all power, and even the self, may be lost⁵.

Looking at the first of these three; Helen's evangelical and conservative Christianity told her that possession by the Holy Spirit was the solution to her problem, and yet she was unable to bring about such a possession. The difference between the Holy Spirit and Niebuhr's "Holy Spirit" may offer some explanation for

⁴ Ibid., I, 183

⁵ See page 86 above

this, in that Helen was seeking for a force to take over in her life so that she could totally abdicate from her own responsibility for her life. She thought that if the Holy Spirit came fully into her life then her own self would die and that God would be in complete control of her. Niebuhr's "Holy Spirit" comes close to that position, but is substantially different in one important respect. As part of his discussion of Galatians 2:20⁶ Niebuhr points out that rather than being simply taken-over by the "Holy Spirit" the individual discovers a new self which is the real self:

The Christian experience of the new life is an experience of a new selfhood. The new self is more truly a real self because the vicious circle of self-centeredness has been broken. The self lives in and for others, in the general orientation of loyalty to, and love of, God; who alone can do justice to the freedom of the self over all partial interests and values. This new self is the real self: for the self is infinitely self-transcendent; and any premature centering of itself around its own interests, individually or collectively, destroys and corrupts its freedom⁷.

Helen was far from experiencing this new selfhood, largely because of her social unrelatedness; and this

⁶ See page 85 above

⁷ Niebuhr, I, 110

unrelatedness is apparently, largely due to a love-less childhood and adolescence, which now blocks her experience of the love of God.

Secondly, Helen was controlled by spiritual forces which were less than the "Holy Spirit". She was particularly preoccupied with an exclusive collective religion which had the effect of alienating her from her self, her family and the greater society of which she was a part. Such religion readily appeals to those who are already socially disconnected and alienated, and it has the effect of further amplifying the alienation. Each of her fears can be seen in connection with this. Her fears of condemnation and the Last Judgement can be viewed as her own will to negation of herself (her self), and the fears of medicals and brain tests can also be linked to this. Also connected is her fear of the stigmata, which may be seen largely as a response to her own poor body image. But all of these fears are simply polarized and compounded by the religious groups with which she was associated. Cortes and Gatti⁸ refer to the fact that demon possession is, in

⁸ Juan B. Cortes and Florence M. Gatti, The Case Against Possession and Exorcisms, (New York: Vantage Press 1975), p. 84

certain cases, a clear response to the decision to carry out an exorcism. In Helen's case, the talk of her "devils" and her repeated visits to a Pentecostal healing meeting and an Anglican exorcist considerably aggravated her predisposition to deny the existence of, and totally devalue, her own self. Such is the power of collective, group forces to destroy a sense of worth in the self. The collective forces completely take over the person in such a way that they demand and gain an unquestioning obedience and devotion to a set of values and a religion which falls a long way short of the "Holy Spirit". This set of values can easily become personified as "the Devil"⁹. At this point it is possible for the Devil to make pretensions of divinity. Its power is revealed by the fact that it can constellate in such a way that Helen was able to hear the Devil speaking to her. It was important, too, for Helen to believe that her counselor believed in "the personal Devil", and so she interpreted one oblique comment about the Devil as a profession of belief on my behalf.

⁹ See page 91 above

For the sake of completion at this point, it should be pointed out that there may be nothing intrinsically evil in such demonic forces. Indeed it may be possible for a person to profess possession by the Holy Spirit, "Holy Spirit", God or Jesus Christ and still be in the grip of the demonic. For Niebuhr, the demonic is characterized by its collective nature and its inability "to do justice to the self in its ultimate freedom"¹⁰. It is interesting, in this connection that when Helen heard the voice of God speaking, the voice told her to do what she wanted to do, which sounds like an attempt to do justice to the self in its ultimate freedom.

In the opinion of the present writer, the conclusion that individuals can be possessed by the demonic in the name of the divine has far-reaching consequences, especially in terms of the pathological form of Christianity which is easily nurtured and encouraged within the life of the church. The subject will be returned to in the next chapter, in the context of pastoral implications for ministry.

¹⁰ Niebuhr, II, 110-111

The third, and remaining, life possibility which Niebuhr describes, and which Helen is experiencing in her life is a process whereby the self is dissolving, in such a way that her emotional strength is being drained and her self is running the risk of extinction. Helen is profoundly uncertain as to how far she is able to possess her own self. Niebuhr does not use the psychological word "ego", but it is useful to use the word "ego" to describe that part of her which she is unable to use in order to confidently control and organize her own life. The words of James Lynwood Walker¹¹, quoted at the beginning of chapter three, should be mentioned again here¹² as they focus on the total passivity of the demoniac. Niebuhr sees this state as a "prison"¹³ and speaks of the need for the self to "be possessed from beyond itself"¹⁴. Helen cannot make this move as possession by "the devils" is

¹¹ James Lynwood Walker, Body and Soul (New York: Abingdon Press, 1971), p. 56

¹² See page 36 above

¹³ Niebuhr, II, 112

¹⁴ Ibid.

preferable to her as against possession of her self by herself, as this would probably lead her into a state of total despair. In the twenty-fifth hour she spoke of "conquering" the devils, and this led her to speak of the possibility of suicide to escape from her sense of despair. She said, "I'm not sure that I can cope with being set free from fear". This is surely one of the most miserable confessions a human being can make, and indicates the depths of her despair.

In a sense which would probably be difficult for Helen to understand, the only real solution to her problems would be possession by the "Holy Spirit" which Niebuhr describes. The freedom which possession by the "Holy Spirit" would bring would be both liberating and anxiety provoking for Helen as she would have to mobilize the self, which is in a very fragile and immature form. This fragility was indicated throughout the counseling, although the self was able to make some clear steps of growth in terms of her ability to obtain and keep a job, for the first time in her life. Also, the nineteenth hour was a turning point in the counseling relationship as it was the first occasion on which her self was able to be assertive in re-

lation to her counselor. This proved to be a very positive experience for her, and she was clearly very much aware of this. The two images which she mentioned of the black door opening and the glimmer of light around the edge, and the vision of the world half in darkness and half in light, were both pointing to a new emergence of the self; although, the second image in particular has an almost psychotic feel to it, and provides a salutary reminder that throughout this process of self-formation, the self is still in danger of destruction.

A remaining aspect of Niebuhr's theology which has not, as yet, been considered concerns "moralism", which Niebuhr profoundly mistrusted. Helen was possessed by an ethic of salvation by works in certain areas of her life and senses God's disapproval of certain activities which she enjoyed and certain attitudes which made sense to her. She found it extremely difficult to risk infringing God's rules. Niebuhr seeks a balance between the reality of being both saint and sinner in the Christian Life:

The theologies which have sought to do justice to the fact that saints nevertheless remain sinners have frequently, perhaps usually, obscured the indeterminate possibilities and realizations of good in both individual and collective life. The theologies which have

sought to do justice to the positive aspects of regeneration have usually obscured the realities of sin which appear on every new level of virtue. This has been true particularly of modern versions of Christian perfectionism; because in them evolutionary and progressive interpretations of history have been compounded with illusions which have a more purely Christian source.

At the moment it is important to emphasize that the two sides of the experience of grace are so related that they do not contradict, but support each other. To understand that the Christ in us is not a possession but a hope, that perfection is not a reality but an intention; that such peace as we know in this life is never purely the peace of achievement but the serenity of being "completely known and all forgiven"; all this does not destroy moral ardour or responsibility. On the contrary it is the only way of preventing premature completions of life, or arresting the new and more terrible pride which may find its roots in the soil of humility, and of saving the Christian life from the intolerable pretension of saints who have forgotten that they are sinners¹⁵.

The balance between saint and sinner and the state of being "completely known and all forgiven", are both the exact opposites of Helen's position, and yet are clearly of the essence of the Christian life.

Helen may, therefore, be seen as an individual, who, in certain key respects, provides a demonstration of the value and incisiveness of Niebuhr's theological system.

¹⁵ Ibid., II, 125

His theology describes, in outline some basic psychological realities in both the individual and collective psyche. If his system can be criticized, it is most clearly questionable in its distinction between the three alternative "possessions" which individuals face. It seems at least possible that most people fall into at least two categories, if not all three, in different aspects of their lives. There is a problem, too, in recognizing the three categories as they are encountered in life. Once having recognized them, the problem still remains as to how they can be used to help one's self and others to achieve possession by the "Holy Sprit", rather than less desirable alternatives.

Also, there is a sense in which Niebuhr's theology may be criticized for its rather mechanistic nature. Niebuhr puts a good deal of emphasis on the realities of the relationship between human beings and God, but as he speaks about God's grace, there is little obvious human warmth. In his writings there are consistently more references to sin than to love or grace. He is more concerned with describing the human situation than he is with describing the mechanisms which can transform the situation.

This certainly speaks to Helen where she is, but there is a question as to how much warmth of human hope Niebuhr's system can offer her.

CHAPTER VI

CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS FOR PASTORAL MINISTRY

1. Demon possession must be taken seriously

The question is frequently asked as to whether there is such a thing as demon possession, or whether somebody is really demon possessed. Answering this question inevitably leads to confusion, as the assumption is made that one of two situations exists; either, (i) the Devil is a personal reality, existing as a totally evil being and at work in the affairs of the universe. It degrades people and leads them to do evil things which they would not do otherwise. Or, (ii), the Devil does not exist and is entirely a figment of imagination. People who see themselves as demon possessed are ipso facto "crazy". Only individuals in the advanced stages of psychosis could believe that they could be controlled by such a non-existent entity.

Both of these positions have been exaggerated slightly for the sake of clarity; but it is true to say that in the popular imagination there is little space for

believing in a Devil which comes in between these two extremes. Conservative Christianity has encouraged the former view and more "scientific" approaches to life have encouraged the latter view. Alongside both of these, in recent years, there has emerged a new fascination with the Devil and the demonic. Most people who go to see such films as "The Exorcist", "The Omen", or "Carrie" would confess no belief in a personal devil and yet many psychological therapists could testify to the widespread psychic disturbance caused by such films. In spite of our very "literalistic" culture, (or perhaps because of it), the power of the demonic is still considerable within the popular imagination. It is possible to offer a number of explanations for this, and several of these can be summarized in terms of our culture's inability to come to terms with its own individual and collective "dark", unlived, repressed side of the ego. It is also possible to see this shift in terms of our society's doubt and uncertainty about God, which has led to a revival of symbols of the demonic.

In the opinion of the present writer, there is no convincing evidence to substantiate the existence of any

concrete reality which may be called the Devil. Having said this; it does not mean that it is impossible for there to be a powerful reality which emerges from time to time in human experience, which can be given an accurate descriptive label as "the Devil". Such a reality may even take control of an individual, or even a culture. The Devil in this sense is a collection and configuration of evil and dark forces and emotions, which are rooted deeply in the unconscious. It is particularly easy for the Devil to take on a 'human' form when it is experienced in the collective context. The Devil has power as long as individuals and societies refuse to recognize the powerful, conflicting forces which are at work deep within the human psyche. In order to protect themselves from the conflict, individuals and societies are able to project out from themselves the less desirable side of the conflict and place it on the individual or group concerned. In the case of Nazi Germany it was the Jews; in the case of South African whites, it is the blacks; in the case of Christians it is often the Devil. It is interesting to note that most cases of demon possession are now happening in the context of the Christian church. The demoniac is often

struggling to be a good Christian as in Helen's situation. In the attempt to be Godly, the sinfulness and "darkness" which exists in every person becomes projected out onto the Devil.

This raises a fundamental theological question concerning human ability to experience "the light", and whether the aim of Christian perfection is life lived completely in "the light". James Hillman says:

The Devil's power seems to grow not in our shadow but from our light. He gains when we lose touch with our own darkness, when we lose sight of our own destructiveness and self-deceptions. Theology says that pride leads directly to the devil; psychology can confirm this since, analytically seen, pride is a denial of the personal shadow and a blind fascination with one's own light. Therefore the best protection is not the reinforcement of the good and the light, but familiarity with one's own shadow, one's own devil-likeness¹.

Alongside this theological/psychological question is a question concerning mental illness. The "dark" is not always simply the evil within, it is also often the crazy element within. Lurking within many individuals is a crazy person who is out of control, and this "dark" has to be kept firmly under control. When individuals appear in

¹ James Hillman, Insearch (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1967), p. 84

our society who are expressing this craziness, they are normally institutionalized. The reason for this is ostensibly to protect the individual concerned; but it is equally designed to restrict contact between the "sane" and the "crazy" as the "sane" find such contact distressing.

If Christian theology is to meet this situation, it must face the reality of the unrealizable ideal of the perfect Christian as being both slightly evil and slightly crazy, as well as possessing the more conventional Christian virtues.

There is a sense in which Helen demonstrates a greater wholeness than most other, more "stable" people. She is at least grappling with her own existential problem and trying to find an almost impossible *modus vivendi* with her own devils. This is difficult for her as she has few ego resources on which to draw. Helen's predicament is a dramatic manifestation of the inner conflict which befalls all human beings, but which few recognize.

2. The psychological dangers inherent in Christianity.

Helen's religious jargon was her one means of contact with her conflict, and her one means of communicating

that conflict to others. In God and the Devil she found powerful symbols of her own inner conflict. Without her religion, it may not have been possible for her to reach the point where she could find expression of her conflict. At the same time, her religion also compounded and exaggerated her inner conflict. There is a sense in which her Christian faith caused her conflict. Perhaps the single most important lesson for the church to learn from Helen's situation is that Christianity can easily become the basis of a deeply rooted pathology. When there is no equal balance between accepting the human condition as both light and dark, a deep existential guilt can become engendered within the life of an individual or a congregation. This can easily happen when the teaching of the church focuses upon an imitation of the perfection of God. This is not to say that the church should not be encouraging people to live better lives, but it is important that Christians discover their own wholeness through the recognition that they are both saints and sinners, and that darkness and light are both in operation in their lives. The life-style of the church should therefore encourage the whole range of human moods, feelings, thoughts and fantasies.

The church must also guard against encouraging any ideas of the self being somehow "possessed", whether this is by God, the Holy Spirit or sacrificial service. The aim of the Christian life is Christian wholeness which cannot be achieved if the self is sacrificed. Martin Luther spoke of his amazing vision of the crucifixion, which comes to him as the most wonderful revelation of his Lord, and yet he saw through the vision to the activity of the Devil, and he banished the Devil from the room. As he did this, the vision instantly disappeared. Luther understood this in terms of the fact that Christ's work had been completed on the cross, and so wherever Christ appeared to be working in the present, it was necessarily the Devil. Such a conclusion automatically calls into question certain aspects of the Pentecostal and Charismatic movement in the contemporary church.

Another aspect of the Christian life which should be mentioned here is that of the life of the Christian family. Many great Christians have apparently had difficult home situations. Christianity can easily become an escape from the responsibilities and difficulties of family life, and the individual concerned will often receive pos-

itive reinforcement from the church for doing this. Instead, there is a sense in which one of the church's primary tasks should be to teach good parenting, and to demonstrate a life-style in which all members of the family are encouraged to discover their own uniqueness.

3. The vulnerability of ministers.

In spite of the fact that most ministers would probably speak of the "Devil" and "demonic" in various theological contexts, few speak of their own personal experience of such forces. James Hillman appeals to ministers to discover a new honesty concerning their own personal "dark" in the form of the "shadow":

.....the reality of the shadow in counseling means that honesty is a grace that we cannot expect - neither from those who come to us and from ourselves to them, nor from anyone to God. The Devil and our own devil-likeness means treachery, even when we have the best intentions. This is the reality of evil. Darkness is never dispersed as long as we are human and walk in the shadow of original sin and Lucifer is the original son. The lie and the cheat are ever-present; and even honesty from God can be doubted, since in the case of Job He gave His ear to Satan².

² Ibid., p. 85

Thus a new style of honesty demands the recognition of individual dishonesty. Hillman sees this as particularly important for those ministers who are involved in pastoral counseling relationships. He sees such people as being particularly vulnerable to "dark" and demonic forces:

The reality of the shadow implies a recognition within the individual counselor of his own vast and collective unconscious, the shadows of his own soul, for just this ignorance of these shadows above all else has been responsible for the long decline of his profession and our faith. The tallest shade in these depths is the same today as always: that sin of pride, the identification with the Christ figure, which can come especially to the fore now in support of the whole role of pastoral counsellor. Today the effects of this identification will be worse as it is a "dead God", one gone wrong, decayed, in the ferment of disintegration and resurrection, that catches the minister from behind so that he can no longer discriminate the spirits and tell who is behind whom: Christ, Devil, or his own complexes. At the shadowy soft edges of the contemporary picture, Christianity and criminality may seep into each other. To a martyr complex of the suffering-servant and the hero-complex of the soldier-of-Christ so much can be justified! When our time is in the dark shadow of Golgotha one need be only a degree or two off course left or right, and one is kneeling before a thief³.

Few ministers acknowledge or demonstrate an awareness of contact with their own shadow, and their sense of impotence under its power, and yet this is surely such an obvious problem when the individual has joined an occupation in

³ Ibid., pp. 85-86

response to the call of God. The question must be asked concerning the implications for ministry when so many individual ministers appear to be held in the grip of Christ, the Devil or complexes. Hillman is, however, hopeful about the ministry of the church, and sees that changes are beginning to happen:

The image of the "man of God" is being changed by the images in the cauldron of his individual turmoil. By staying true to the turmoil in his soul, through thick and thin, not only is theology being changed but a new way of caring for the soul is emerging. This is the new pastoral care based on the experience of the counsellor within himself⁴.

Hillman sees the recovery of the meaning of the soul as fundamental to meaningful contemporary expressions of ministry. He sees a clear role for the one who cares for souls, and that person is the pastor and definitely not the psychological professional. However, if the pastor is to care for souls, she or he must begin by caring for their own soul. If an individual is to care for their own soul, they must build a living relationship with their own shadow.

⁴ Ibid., p. 42

4. Demon Possession and Exorcism: the present situation.

One evening in October 1974, in a small town in northern England, a man named Michael Taylor went to the home of the local Anglican priest and a service of exorcism took place in which forty evil spirits were exorcised⁵. At 7 A.M. the following morning he left the house and two hours later he brutally murdered his wife with his bare hands. A Methodist lay preacher was also involved with the Anglican priest in the exorcism, and both confessed that they should have been more determined in their attempts to get psychiatric help than they were. They sincerely believed that exorcism was the most appropriate form of treatment for Michael Taylor, and felt that they had removed all the other demons which possessed him except for the demon of murder. In legal proceedings which followed, the question was raised as to whether the exorcists were in any way responsible for the murder, and this led to a widespread debate within Britain, and especially within the churches.

⁵ For details, see the Los Angeles Times report on this case, which appears in Appendix A.

Alongside this, the film of "The Exorcist" was receiving a lot of publicity and this was followed by the death of Mary Ure in circumstances which were uncannily similar to her role in the play "The Exorcism".

In the summer of 1976 a case emerged in Würzburg, West Germany,⁶ in which a 23 year-old woman who claimed to be demon possessed, starved herself to death. Two Roman Catholic priests had been conducting exorcisms with her for the ten months before her death. Again the question was raised as to whether the priests were in some way responsible for her death.

Interest in the question of exorcism in Britain resulted in three major statements on the subject from the Church of England⁷, the Church of Scotland⁸, and the British Methodist Church⁹. The Methodist statement was the

⁶ For details see the Time magazine article on this case, which appears in Appendix B.

⁷ Church of England, Exorcism, Deliverence and Healing (Bramcote, Notts: Grove Books, 1976)

⁸ Church of Scotland, Report of the Working Party on Parapsychology (Edinburgh: 1976)

⁹ Methodist Church of Great Britain, A Methodist Statement on Exorcism (Methodist Division of Social Responsibility, 1976). The "Guide lines" from this report are to be found in Appendix C.

shortest and simply elaborated the various attitudes held by different groups within the church and then urged extreme (if not unrealistic) caution in dealing with possession cases¹⁰. The Church of Scotland was equally cautious, but made the point clearly that:

The Exorcist can, by sharing his client's delusions and confirming his fears, compound a delusional trend both in the victim and in the community. The current wave of infatuation with the occult can be explained in various ways. It is seen by some as the Devil and his agents running wild in a godless age, by others as a craving for the magic powers to impose control in life which a Deus Absconditus has abrogated. Whatever the reason, it cannot avoid being compared with the eruptions of possession which were characteristic of the Mediaeval period. Then the temptation was to meet demons with a counter-magic rite such as is described in the "Ritualae Romanum for Exorcism", which adjured by a holy name and bound the spirit and drove it away. This was often effective, but does not prove the reality of the demons or that Exorcism is a desirable procedure. It simply makes use of Exorcism as a psychotherapeutic technique, just as the shamans, magi and medicine men of history have used their power of suggestion to effect cures¹¹.

The report goes on to encourage informal prayer with the individuals concerned, and encourages the idea of including in the prayers mention of the specific concerns

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Church of Scotland, paragraph 42, p. 11

mentioned by them. There is complete opposition to the use of any formal rite of exorcism.

The major dissension from the general view of the British churches has come from the Charismatic wing of the Church of England. In a series of articles¹² and a book¹³, the Charismatic writer, John Richards, asserted the value of exorcism and defended the exorcists involved in the Michael Taylor case, insisting that "they did not create a killer; they were ministering to one"¹⁴. He insists also that there was a need for exorcism in such a situation. Richards likens the task of exorcism to the task of surgery, and says that even when the demon has been expelled, there is still the need for healing, just as there is after surgery¹⁵. He also insists that the Pentecostal approach to healing and exorcism is inevitably dif-

¹² John Richards, "Exorcism - Spiritual Surgery", Church of England Newspaper (April 18, 1975); John Richards, "Exorcism Today", Renewal, LVII (June/July 1975); John Richards, "The role of the local church in the ministry of deliverance", Renewal, LVIX (October/November 1975)

¹³ John Richards, But Deliver Us From Evil (London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 1974)

¹⁴ Richards, "The Role of the Local Church", p. 17

¹⁵ Ibid.

ferent from that of traditional approaches within the church. Richards goes on to provide a formal liturgy to be used in services of exorcism¹⁶. In introducing this he points out that he does not see exorcism as primarily concerned with "driving away evil", but rather as "the church active in bringing into a distorted situation through its ministry the 'grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit'"¹⁷.

The main justification which Richards brings forward in favor of exorcism is the fact that it often works. He would also point to the New Testament as a source of authority on this matter. He fails to offer any concrete theological and psychological substantiation beyond this. There is little question that when exorcism is employed it often has the effect of removing those symptoms which are disturbing a troubled mind or body. What is in question here is the legitimacy of using a technique which has a questionable success ratio, and a technique which employs methods which can be positively harmful to the health of

¹⁶ The text of the liturgy is provided in Appendix D.

¹⁷ Church of England, p. 18

the psyche in the long term. The overall effect of exorcism is to remove from individuals the responsibility for their own mind and body. This is a complete denial of the New Testament concept of wholeness, and also militates against psychological understandings of the need for individual integrity.

The main argument against exorcism, however, is not the argument questioning its efficacy; it is rather the argument that exorcism is often the cause of demon possession rather than its cure¹⁸. If the inducement of demon possession is viewed as some kind of cure for psychological problems, it is surely a very crude and ineffective tool to use!

5. Demon possession: guidelines for ministers

(i) A "preventative" approach. The single most important action which a minister can take with respect to demon possession, is to encourage a style of religion and Christian faith which avoids the construction of the situation in which demon possession takes. There is a sense

¹⁸ See page 101 above

in which demons can be dealt with in the normal healthy routine of church life, long before they constellate into a possession syndrome. As outlined earlier in this chapter¹⁹ this involves a fuller recognition of the shadowy and dark side of human existence, and this process must begin within the minister.

(ii) Acceptance. It is easy to identify sufferers from many psychological problems as crazy. Demoniacs can easily be regarded as crazy, and yet there is a very serious existential/theological problem at the root of their lives. In such cases it may be important for the minister to be able to go with the person into their delusional world and take it seriously. A minister should be able to feel confident doing this and not feel intimidated by the bizarre nature of the material encountered. (Maybe a thorough study of the Book of Daniel or the Book of Revelation might help prevent this!) Even if the minister does not feel psychologically competent to work with this

¹⁹ See page 117 above

material, it should at least be possible to stay with, and accept, the person in their delusional world. This can easily happen and mean that the minister becomes pre-occupied with the delusional material in such a way that he/she fails to be sensitive to the real and practical needs of the individual concerned.

(iii) Consultation and support. Consultation and support are fundamental to all aspects of pastoral ministry. A minister must have available a number of colleagues and trustworthy relationships with those in associated professions so that, in pastoral situations of this kind, a wide range of consultations can be made and appropriate medical, psychological, spiritual and social recommendations can be made to the individual or their family. In the middle of a busy routine, it is easy for this aspect of pastoral ministry to be ignored and undervalued. Without the support of others there is also the danger that a minister will become over-involved in a way which could be detrimental to her/his own health as well as the health of the demon-possessed person.

(iv) Exorcism and prayer. Under no circumstances should exorcism be regarded as the basic form of healing. Whether or not the word "exorcism" is used, the impression of something being removed from the individual should be avoided. Instead there should be an emphasis on the sense of despair and the reality of the love of God. If demon possessed individuals can find themselves praying for the love of God to work in their life they are close to starting a process of release from the possession. Prayer should be encouraged as a centering process. If individuals are very persistent in their demands for exorcism, it is very important not to relent, and to strongly urge the alternatives. By giving any hint of a suggestion that a person could be possessed by something outside themselves, there is the danger of collusion with inner complexes which will lead simply to an aggravation of the situation.

(v) Referral. There is an ongoing problem of referral in all the "helping professions"; and with ministers, doubts concerning professional identity often make this a bigger problem than it would be otherwise. Along-

side a support structure from members of other professions, a minister should seek out those in the other professions whom she/he feels to be trustworthy, so that, in collaboration with the other professional, a referral can be made. In some cases of demon possession it may be necessary for the minister to go with the person to a first meeting with a psychiatrist or doctor, and attempt to reassure the person that the other professional has an understanding of "spiritual" matters. When the transition has taken place, it is important for the minister to maintain pastoral contact with the person and to show an interest, without interfering in the therapeutic contract with the other professional person.

(vi) Failure. No matter how conscientious or involved a minister or other helping professional may be, there are real limits to the extent to which certain individuals can be helped. Ministers should be aware of the danger of feeling guilty when they quite genuinely do not have the answer to the problems of a demon possessed person. There is often the fear that a demon possessed person may murder or commit suicide. Clearly, these and other realities should be taken seriously, and there will be

times when inevitably, such things happen. With the benefit of hindsight such occurrences could be avoided, but it is unrealistic to expect oneself to have such powers of divination.

(vii) A positive approach. As well as the evil and frightening aspects of demon possession, there is also a positive aspect to any such encounter. This positive aspect should not be approached with a begrudging "every cloud has a silver lining" attitude, but rather in the realization that the power of the demonic can be harnessed to support the process of growth. Martin Ebon²⁰ concludes his book with a chapter entitled "Know your Demon!" which points to the positive use of the demonic in the growth process. William Kyle also makes a similar point²¹. It is perilous to ignore the power of the demonic and exciting to become acquainted with the demonic on a personal basis.

²⁰ Martin Ebon, The Devil's Bride (New York: Harper & Row, 1974), pp. 221-242

²¹ William Kyle, "Demons and Exorcism", Methodist Recorder (April 10, 1975)

APPENDIX

APPENDIX A

REPORT ON THE "BARNESLEY CASE"

Los Angeles Times, Thursday, March 27, 1975.

MURDER TRIAL: TALE OF DEMONS, 'EXORCISM' BRAINWASHED
BRITAIN FOUND INNOCENT BY REASON OF INSANITY

By Harry Trimborn

Michael Taylor stumbled from a church in the town of Barnsley in the English Midlands one morning last October, trembling and exhausted from the spiritual scouring of an all-night ritual of exorcism.

The Exorcists, including two clergymen, had cast out about 40 evil spirits that had taken possession of the 31-year-old father of five. But at least one remained - the spirit of murder.

Two hours later the tall slender unemployed laborer killed his wife, Catherine, 21 "the darling of his life with unspeakable brutality", as his attorney Harry Ognell put it. She, too, was supposedly possessed by Satan, and Taylor believed it.

"He killed her with his bare hands" said prosecutor Geoffrey Baker at Taylor's murder trial Tuesday in nearby Leeds.

The jury found Taylor innocent of murder by reason of insanity and the court ordered him held in a mental hospital.

The verdict came after the jury heard a bizarre story of witchcraft, spiritual possession and supernatural violence that plunged the courtroom into the blackest recess of the Middle Ages during its unfolding. The case exploded with a burst of publicity that, as the

trial judge Justice Bernard Caulfield, put it "is bound to achieve some notoriety".

According to testimony, it could all have been avoided if Taylor had been given psychiatric help in the days preceding the tragedy. Said prosecutor Baker: "It is a thousand pities that such help had not been given".

For Taylor, of limited intelligence and in a state of depression over his inability to find work, was victim not of demons, but of suggestion. He was "brainwashed" said one witness.

After his arrest, Taylor told police: "They (the exorcists) had tried to bring me peace of mind, but instead they filled me with the devil. I was compelled by the forces within me to destroy everything in our house."

The two clergymen involved, the Rev. Peter Vincent of the Anglican Church, and the Rev. Raymond Smith, a Methodist minister, denied any wrongdoing. But they said that they would withhold comment until after the trial.

When asked by a reporter if he was an exorcist, Mr. Vincent declared: "Good gracious no! I am a simple parish priest."

However, Taylor's attorney read a statement at the trial in which Mr. Vincent indicated that he had indeed taken part in an exorcism of Taylor.

The gruesome story unfolded, according to the prosecutor, this way:

Taylor, happily married and a devoted father, began attending meetings last September of an organization called the Christian Fellowship Group, which met in homes for Bible reading and hymn singing. At one meeting he met a 22-year-old woman named Marie Robinson, who was later accused by one of those involved of luring Taylor into the service of Satan. Although unordained, Miss Robinson allegedly administered Holy Communion to one of the participants, and later began

"speaking in tongues" - unintelligible utterances of prayer - saying she was possessed of the Holy Spirit.

Then, according to Baker, Miss Robinson performed an act of exorcism on one member of the group which had a "very profound" influence on Taylor.

Taylor began behaving irrationally - even violently - over the next few days, claiming he had seen the devil. Friends took him to Mr. Vincent's church where he flew into a rage and struck the clergyman who had taken part in the Christian Fellowship meetings.

Mr. Vincent's wife decided, said Baker, that "there was an enormous force of evil emanating from Taylor", which required a spiritual assault.

To assist in expelling the evil, the Vincents sought the advice of Mr. Smith, his wife and a Methodist lay preacher, and they decided on a cure.

"It is perhaps astonishing in this day and age" said Baker. "They all came to the conclusion that Taylor was demoniacally possessed by Satan, by a strong force of evil which required nothing more or less than prolonged exorcism."

However, Mrs. Smith dissented, maintaining that Taylor "really needed to be in a psychiatric unit."

"This suggestion was considered" said Baker. "It was solemnly rejected. And the two ministers along with three other men undertook the exorcism."

One participant in the rituals said that Taylor had three demons left in him - insanity, murder and violence.

But a third disagreed. "Only the spirit of murder remained and could not be expelled" he said.

Mr. Vincent was reported to have said in his statement: "Certain evil spirits did not yield to our com-

mand to leave his body. There was the spirit of murder. This did not imply an actual murder, but a desire to kill."

At the end of the exorcism at 7 A.M. on Oct. 6, the participants felt that perhaps Taylor really did need psychiatric help, and some effort was made to contact health authorities. But it was too late.

He was "possessed of the spirit of murder" according to testimony and murdered his wife when she returned home after telephoning for a doctor from a neighbor's house.

APPENDIX B

REPORT ON THE WEST GERMAN CASE

Time Magazine, September 6, 1976, p. 68.

A PHENOMENON OF FEAR

Anneliese Michel seemed to build her life around an old-fashioned kind of Roman Catholic devotion. In her dormitory room at West Germany's University of Wurzburg, the pretty, pious young education student covered her walls with pictures of saints, kept a holy water font near the door, regularly prayed the rosary. Timid and intense, she seemed somehow afraid of life; even in her thesis, which she finished this spring, she focused on the phenomenon of fear. Then one month later, Anneliese died at home in Klingenberg at the age of 23, wasted to skin and bones. Cause of death, according to an autopsy: "malnutrition and dehydration."

The local prosecutor immediately launched an investigation. Anneliese, it seems, was a case straight out of 'The Exorcist'. Ever since high school she had been subject to convulsive seizures, attacks that a neurologist diagnosed as epilepsy. Doctors had little success in treating her. Her devout parents, in desperation, began consulting priests. Finally, with permission from Bishop Josef Stangl of Wurzburg, they brought in two exorcists - Father Arnold Renz, a former missionary in China, and Father Ernst Alt, a pastor in a nearby community. For ten months, beginning last September and continuing until shortly before her death, the two priests conducted an intermittent series of exorcisms to rid Anneliese of six demons they believed possessed her. The efforts were of no avail. About Easter time her convulsions returned with renewed ferocity, and she began to refuse food and drink. No doctors were called.

In an extraordinary 45-minute television feature a month after Anneliese's death, Father Renz claimed that the six evil spirits attacking her included Lucifer, Nero, Judas, Cain and Adolf Hitler - who used to shout "Heil!" through Anneliese's voice. Renz even played one of the 43 tapes made during the exorcisms so that the listeners could hear Anneliese growling obscenities, screaming guttural curses and raving wildly. Only death finally released her. Said Renz: "The devil does not reside in a dead body."

So far, the investigation has not determined whether the exorcists, Anneliese's parents or Bishop Stangl might have negligently contributed to Anneliese's death. The Bishop himself, in a thoughtful and somewhat apologetic supplement to the Wurzburg diocesan paper, explained that exorcism was meant to be nothing more than a prayer "for a person who feels at the mercy (of other forces) and cannot pray for himself". Any necessary medical help must accompany it, he insisted.

The bishop also warned that any talk of the devil that is intended to "strike terror into the hearts of people instead of arousing confidence in God" is contrary to the spirit of the New Testament. Misconceptions about "demoniacal possession," he reminded them had played a "disastrous role" over the centuries. So they had. In Wurzburg alone, in one grim year in the 17th century, some 300 witches had been burned for trafficking with the devil.

APPENDIX C

BRITISH METHODIST "GUIDELINES"

"Guidelines" for ministers who encounter demon possession situations, as decided by the British Methodist Conference in June 1976.

Despite the variety of viewpoint which is reflected within Methodism, certain interim guidelines can be offered to ministers giving pastoral help to those who believe themselves to be possessed, or whom the minister believes to be possessed.

- (i) These cases must remain within the context of the life and worship of the church. Even when exorcism is practised it must be regarded as only one aspect of the pastoral ministry required.
- (ii) No minister or layman should act independently in these circumstances. The Superintendent and other Ministers of the Circuit must always be consulted as they would be in other difficult pastoral situations. The Chairman of the District should also be asked to suggest appropriate sources of help.
- (iii) There should be a thorough pastoral investigation of the case, including, save in totally exceptional circumstances, close and continuing collaboration with suitable persons qualified in medicine, psychology and the social services, including the appropriate referral of the person seeking help.
- (iv) Since pastoral guidance is first and foremost concerned to assure people of the presence and love of Christ, it is important to follow this practice in these cases also.

- (v) The ministry of bible, prayer and sacraments should be extended to those seeking help.
- (vi) The form of any service of healing for those believed or believing themselves to be possessed should be considered in consultation with the ministerial staff of the circuit (or in one-minister circuits with those whom the Chairman of the District suggests). Such a service should not be carried out when a person is in a highly excited state. It should not be unnecessarily prolonged. Publicity must be kept to a minimum.
- (vii) Continuing pastoral care of the person concerned should involve as essential ingredients the teaching of the faith and incorporation into the worshipping community of the Church.

APPENDIX D

Church of England Liturgy for a service of Exorcism.*

(a) THE PREPARATION

1. When all are assembled the minister may begin thus:
In the name of the Father and of the Son and of
the Holy Spirit. Amen.
2. One or more specified reading of Scripture.
3. The minister may then say:
Let us confess our sins to Almighty God.

All shall respond:

Almighty God, our heavenly Father,
we have sinned against you and against our
fellow men,
in thought and word and deed,
in the evil we have done,
through ignorance, through weakness,
through our own deliberate fault.
We are truly sorry and repent of all our sins.
For the sake of your Son, Jesus Christ, who died
for us,
forgive us all that is past;
and grant that we may live in newness of life
to the glory of your Name. Amen.

A prayer of absolution shall follow.

*As contained in Church of England, Archbishop
of York's study group, The Christian Meaning of Healing
and Deliverance (Diocese of York, 1974)

(In the interests of brevity, some details and
rubrics have been omitted).

4. The minister may then conduct an act of recollection, in his own words, or silently, or in this form:

Minister: O Lord save your servants:

All: who put their trust in you

M: Be to them a strong tower:

A: from the face of the enemy.

M: Send them help from your sanctuary:

A: and strengthen them from your Holy Place.

M: O Lord, hear our prayer:

A: and let our cry come up to you.

(b) THE DELIVERANCE

5. The minister and assistants shall stand around the sufferer and the minister shall say in a loud voice:

In the Name of Jesus of Nazareth, Son of the Most High God, I bind you, evil spirit(s), and command you to leave this person N., to harm no one, and to go to your own place, never to return. Amen.

The Exorcism shall be repeated as necessary.

6. If the sufferer has not already made a confession he shall do so now.
7. The Minister may then encourage the sufferer to make an act of renunciation and of faith, in the sufferer's own words or the minister's words or this form:

In the Name of Jesus of Nazareth,
 Son of the Most High God,
 I, N., renounce the devil and all his works,
 every occult practice of myself and of my fore-
 fathers,
 and every hold that evil has upon me.
 From now on I subscribe myself to the service and
 protection of Jesus Christ my Lord,
 who triumphed over evil on the Cross,
 and now lives for ever.
 His blood avails for me! Amen.

8. The minister and one or two assistants shall then lay their hands upon the head and shoulders of the person, the minister saying:

Christ be with you: Christ before you:
Christ on your right: Christ above you:
Christ around you: Christ within you:
Christ behind you: Christ on your left:
Christ beneath you; now and ever. Amen.

(c) THE CONCLUSION

9. The service may conclude with the Lord's Prayer.
(The sufferer may appear to fall asleep. If so he should be left in quiet).
10. The person should be prepared by his priest for Baptism and/or Anointing and/or Holy Communion at the earliest suitable time.

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